F. 12. 2

TEN SERMONS

Preach'd before

Her Royal Highneſs

THE

Princeſs *ANN* of *Denmark*,

AT THE

Chappel at St. *James*'s.

BY

LEWIS ATTERBURY, LL.D.

And one of the Six Preachers to Her Royal Highneſs.

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TO

Her Royal Highneſs

THE

Princeſs *ANN* of *DENMARK*.

May it pleaſe your Royal Highneſs,

TO permit me to Shelter theſe Sermons under your Protection, which were at firſt Preach'd in your Preſence. The Deſign of them is to draw in little, that lovely Picture, and amiable Idea of Vertue and Holineſs, which if well conſider'd would captivate the Affections of all Men; and to lay down the moſt neceſſary Rules, and prevailing Motives, for the Attainment of them: And therefore, I have been the more Ambitious to prefix your Name; ſince by your Authority you can Command, as well as by your Example allure, to the Practice of them.

Your ſteady adherence to the Doctrine and Diſcipline of the Church of England, *your conſtant Attendance on the Publick Offices of Religion, your devout Deport-*

portment during the time of Divine Service, your Juſtice in giving to every one their due, your Charity to the diſtreſs'd and miſerable, the Innocency and Exemplarineſs of your Life; are ſo well known to the World, ſo much admir'd, and reverenc'd, that whatſoever has your favourable Look, needs no other Recommendation.

God grant that you may long continue what you now are, an Illuſtrious Example of Vertue and Piety, that you may enjoy all the good things this World can afford you; and at laſt be Crown'd with a late Immortality; which is the daily Prayer of

Your Royal Highneſs's,

Moſt Humble, and

Moſt obedient Servant,

Lewis Atterbury.

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SERMON I.

1 TIM. IV. The latter part of the 8th. Verſe.

For Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having the Promiſes of the Life that now is, and that which is to come.

AMONGST the many Artifices which the Devil makes uſe of to deprive Men of Heaven and eternal Happineſs, there has none been more fatally ſucceſsful, than the prepoſſeſſing their Minds with a falſe Notion, That the way that leads thither is ſo narrow, that 'tis unpaſſable; the Gate ſo ſtraight, that there is no entring thro' it, and the Difficulties of a good Life ſo great, that they are altogether inſuperable. 'Tis commonly thought that when Men enter upon a Religious Courſe of Life, they muſt bid adieu to

the World, and all its Pleaſures and Enjoyments, and deny themſelves the moſt innocent Gratifications of Senſe: They muſt give themſelves up to a thoughtful, melancholy, and moroſe way of living, and retire from all good Company, and agreeable Converſation; that their whole time muſt be ſpent in the Practice of thoſe uneaſie Duties of Mortification, Self-denial, and taking up the Croſs; and in ſhort, that 'tis impoſſible for them to live religiouſly, and to live pleaſantly. And therefore ſince they have not any ſenſible Demonſtration of the Happineſs of the other World, they are reſolv'd to enjoy as much as they can in this, and to make ſure of their Portion here, whatſoever becomes of them hereafter. Whereas could they be perſwaded to make Tryal for ſome time of a virtuous and religious Life, would they but give themſelves up for ſome conſiderable ſpace to the Practice of Piety and Devotion; they muſt needs be convinced, that the moſt likely way to lead a comfortable, cheerful, and pleaſant Life, is, *to fear God, and obey his commandments*; and that our Happineſs doth conſiſt in the performance of our Duty. For even *in keeping his commandments there is great reward, and Godlineſs has the Promiſes of the*

Eccleſ. 12. 13.

Pſal. 19. 11.

the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come.

As will appear by conſidering,

Firſt, That a religious Life promotes our Happineſs in this World.

Secondly, It fits and prepares us for the Enjoyment of everlaſting Happineſs, in the Life to come.

Firſt, A religious Life promotes our Happineſs in this World. And this it performs,

1. By promoting the Intereſt of Mankind in general, and, 2. Of every private and particular Perſon.

I. Obedience to the Precepts of Religion, promotes the Intereſt of Mankind in General. The deſign of the great Creator and Governour of the world, is to make all his Creatures as happy as their Capacities will admit of, and therefore he has ſuited his Laws to the Nature of thoſe Beings, which are to be govern'd by them; that by the obſervance of his Commands, they may not only pay him that Homage which he requires of them, but promote their own Happineſs alſo. For the ſame end he ſent his Son into the world, *viz.* to be a publick Bleſſing to all the Nations of the Earth: And therefore all

thoſe Articles of Faith, and Precepts of Morality which he taught his followers, were equally for the Intereſt of all Men to believe and practiſe; nay, they are made more or leſs neceſſary, in proportion to their Tendency to promote the good of Societies, and the well being of Mankind. Hence Self-love (when excluſive of the love of our Neighbour) is branded with ſo odious a Character in the Holy Writ: and on the contrary, the Duties of Charity, Love, Peaceableneſs, Meekneſs, Temperance, and Juſtice; are ſo frequently inculcated and recommended to us in the Goſpel: Becauſe where thoſe are duly and conſcientiouſly practiſed, Princes will be ſecure in their Prerogatives, and the People in their Liberties; the Church will ſupport the State, and the State protect the Church; Parents will be tenderly affected towards their Off-ſpring, and Children dutiful towards their Parents; Maſters will be faithfully ſerv'd, and Servants well uſed; all degrees of Men will ſerve God and their Countrey, in their ſeveral Places and Stations, and hereby promote the Weal and flouriſhing Condition of thoſe Kingdoms in which they live; Neighbour Nations will forget their mutual Quarrels and Animoſities, *beat their ſwords into plow ſhares,*

Iſa. 2. 4.

ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning hooks, and willingly concur to proclaim an Univerſal Jubile of Peace thro' the Univerſe.

II. 'Tis the Intereſt of every private and particular Perſon, to lead a Godly and religious Life. Which will plainly appear from theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, That there is very little true Pleaſure to be found in a debauch'd and wicked Courſe of Life.

Secondly, That the way to lead a comfortable Life even in this world, is to be vertuous and religious.

Thirdly, That the worſt Circumſtances a good Man can fall into, are to be preferr'd before the moſt proſperous Condition of the Wicked: And if ſo, then certainly 'tis the true Intereſt of every one, to lead a Holy and religious Life.

Firſt, 'Tis evident, that there is very little true Pleaſure to be found in a debauch'd and wicked Courſe of Life; becauſe

1. A wicked Courſe of Life is contrary to the Dictates of a Man's own Reaſon: For ſince Man is a reaſonable Being, God has enjoyn'd him a reaſonable Service; and therefore he who diſobeys the Laws of God, muſt do violence to himſelf,

ſelf, and Act contrary to the Dictates of his own mind. God has indulg'd Mankind in all the reaſonable Gratifications of his ſenſual Appetites; he has furniſhed this World like a plentiful Store-houſe, with all things neceſſary for his Subſiſtence and Delight; and permitted and allowed him to taſte of every Sweet, every thing which his Soul deſires, provided he keeps within the Bounds of Reaſon and Juſtice, Temperance and Sobriety; that his Affections are not too much ſet upon them, or his precious time too long taken up, in the purſuit of them. God is not ſo hard a Maſter as to create Mankind with ſtrong Propenſions and Appetites, and then to tye him up from the Gratification of them; to ſhew him Pleaſures and agreeable Objects, and to deny him the Satisfaction of enjoying them: No, the great Father and Benefactor of Mankind ſincerely deſires, and has provided for our Happineſs in this World, as well as the next; and reſtrains us only from the abuſe of his Creatures, and an inordinate and exceſſive Love and Affection towards them. He delights to ſee Men live ſutably to their Natures, and pleaſe themſelves with the rational Enjoyments of a harmleſs and innocent Life: And 'tis our own Sin and Folly which makes

us

us miſerable, faſtens us to the Oar, and obliges us to that hard Condition, of *getting our bread with the Sweat of our brows.* In the State of Innocency, Man's Reaſon gave bounds to his Deſires; his Will was ſufficient to govern his Actions, and to conduct him to Happineſs: But when he fell from his Integrity, the Faculties of his Soul, were weaken'd and diſorder'd; his Paſſions grew ſo head-ſtrong, that he was not able to reſtrain them within their due Bounds, without the aſſiſtance of a ſupernatural Power. And from this rage and diſorder of our Paſſions, all our irregular Deſires after unlawful Pleaſure do proceed; which muſt needs diſturb the Happineſs of that Soul wherein they reſide. For every ſinful Luſt we entertain in our Souls, is a deflection from the Laws of right Reaſon; every ſin that we commit, is a baſe, a fooliſh, and unmanly Act; 'tis below the Dignity of our Nature, and by conſequence contrary to our true Intereſt. Gen. 3. 19.

2. The Pleaſures of a wicked Life are precarious and uncertain; either we may be ſnatch'd away from them, or thoſe Delights may leave and forſake us. 'Twas the obſervation of the Philoſopher long ago; that nothing can make us Happy which is not in our own Power: For 'tis the

next ſtep to Miſery to conſider, that for ought we know, the very next moment this may be our Condition. Every Age, and every Kingdom will furniſh us with Inſtances more than enough, of the inconſtancy of worldly Pleaſure: The revenge of *Saul* was fruſtrated when he had got *David* into his Net; and *Herod's* Divinity vaniſh'd in the midſt of his Adorers, and the Worms became the Executioners of God's juſt Indignation againſt him. The *rich Man* in the Goſpel had no ſooner ſung a *Requiem* to his Soul, but he had this Sentence pronounced againſt
Luk 12.20. him, *Thou fool, this night thy Soul ſhall be required of thee.* Nay, frequently a vain and cauſeleſs Fear ſtrips us of all theſe Enjoyments; and they are ſo truly the Creatures of Phancy, that upon the leaſt alteration of our fickle and unſtable Minds, they vaniſh and diſappear.

3. The Pleaſures of a ſinful Life are but ſhort at the beſt. Though nothing ſhould interrupt them, yet they fade of themſelves, *and paſs away like a Tale that is told*: They yield us ſome little Amuſement for the preſent, and divert our Thoughts from more ſerious and profitable Employments; but are of no longer Duration than the preſent moment. We our ſelves cannot continue long in the

the World; and if we could, yet we ſhould either loſe the reliſh of Pleaſure; or, what is worſe, it would grow nauſeous and burthenſome to us.

Laſtly, Sinful Pleaſures are attended with perpetual Fears and miſgivings of Conſcience. And here let me appeal to every ones Experience, whether Shame and Confuſion do not ſeize upon him, and Horror ſtrike through his Soul, whilſt he is in the Commiſſion of any wicked Action? Doth he not (like his firſt Father *Adam*) run away from the Preſence of his God, as aſham'd of his own Nakedneſs; or ſew Fig-leaves together, make ſome poor Excuſes to cover it? Thus it is at firſt, till Conſcience is either lull'd aſleep or fear'd, and Cuſtom in ſinning has, in ſome meaſure, taken off the dread of that Puniſhment which is due to it; and becauſe Vengeance ſeems to ſlumber, the hardned Sinner is the leſs apprehenſive of it: And yet for all this his Conſcience ſometimes awakes, lays before him the things he had done, Arraigns and Condemns him for them. When he lies on a Sick-bed, or ſome grievous Affliction or Calamity befalls him, this recalls his wandring Thoughts, brings to his Mind the Actions of his paſt Life, and ſhews them to him in a true Light, and in their proper Colours. This

This calms the Rage and hurry of his Paſſions, diſpels the Fumes of Senſuality, and gives him a true Proſpect of his Condition: And then he begins naturally thus to Reaſon with himſelf; What if there ſhould at laſt be a God, whom I have made it my buſineſs all my Life long to affront? What if there ſhould be a day of Account, and a State of everlaſting Bliſs or Miſery? What a miſerable Condition am I in; loſt and undone to all Eternity? I have indeed liv'd a Life of Pleaſure and Senſuality; I have indulg'd my ſelf in every thing which my Heart could wiſh: But alas! all thoſe Delights are now fled away; there now remains nothing of them, but the uneaſie remembrance: I have nothing to expect from a Juſt and offended God, but eternal Miſery and everlaſting Torments. Such Reflections as theſe do frequently break in upon the vicious Liver, theſe miſgivings of Mind, do haunt and purſue him; and will not ſuffer him to go on quietly in his wicked Courſes; but render him uneaſie here, as well as miſerable hereafter. And therefore,

Secondly, The way to lead a comfortable Life, even in this World; is to be vertuous and religious. This is evident,

I. Be-

I. Becauſe the leading of a Vertuous and religious Life, is the moſt likely means to obtain the good things of this World.

II. Becauſe it heightens and improves the Enjoyment of them.

1. The leading of a Vertuous and religious Life, is the moſt likely means to obtain the good things of this World. Now the Goods of this World may be reduc'd to theſe three Heads. 1. Health and long Life. 2. Riches. 3. Honour and Reputation.

1. An honeſt, vertuous, and religious Life, is the moſt proper Courſe to preſerve our Health and prolong our Lives. For Religion teaches us to be ſober, chaſt, and temperate; to avoid all exceſs in Meat, Drink or Sleep, which lays the Foundation of moſt Diſeaſes, and breaks off the thread of our Lives: It teaches us to govern our Paſſions, and to keep them within their due Bounds; and hereby procures ſuch an even and ſteady temper of Mind, as contains the Blood in its due Ferment, the Humours in their proper Channels, and promotes Health, and a vigorous Conſtitution. *Bleſſed are the meek, for they ſhall inherit the Earth.* Saith our Bleſſed Saviour (*i.e.*) a quiet, meek, and humble frame of Spirit will conduce very much to prolong Matth. 5. 5.

long our days in this World, and prevent thoſe Broils and Quarrels (occaſion'd by exorbitant Paſſion) which bring ſo many Men to untimely ends. And Laſtly, It teaches us to ſerve God, and to live up to the end for which we were created; whereby we obtain ſuch inward Comfort and Satisfaction of mind, *The Feaſt of a good Conſcience*, as renders us of a pleaſant Humour, and chearful Diſpoſition; which, as the wiſe Man obſerves, *doth good like a Medicine.*

Prov. 17. 22.

2. A vertuous and religious Life, is the moſt likely means to make us rich: By encouraging us to be induſtrious in our ſeveral Callings, honeſt in our Dealings, frugal in our Expences (which are the moſt proper means of getting and keeping Riches) and diverting us from all thoſe expenſive Vices; of Gaming, Intemperance, and Laſciviouſneſs, which have conſumed ſo many Eſtates, and *brought many a Man to a Morſel of bread.* But above all, it brings the Bleſſing of God along with it, and gives Succeſs to our honeſt Endeavours; ſo that we have reaſon to ſtand amaz'd at our own Plenty, as being hardly able to reconcile our Income with our Expences.

3. For Honour and Reputation: Theſe are ſcarce ever known to be obtain'd, but by

by a Life led according to the Rules of Vertue and Honeſty. For tho' a wicked Man may have Titles heap'd upon him, and derive his Pedigree from a long Succeſſion of illuſtrious Anceſtors; tho' he may be followed by a numerous Train of Servants and Dependants, and have the Shouts and Acclamations of the Rabble, and be ador'd by his ſervile Flatterers as a God; tho' they may applaud every word he ſpeaks as if it were an Oracle; yet 'tis plain, that they deſpiſe and contemn the Man, whilſt they adore his Fortune: 'Tis not the Aſs but the golden Image he bears, they fall down to; for whenever the Scale of Fortune turns, and this great wicked Man falls into Poverty and Diſgrace, he becomes the Scorn and Laughing-ſtock of his moſt ſuppliant Admirers; and thoſe very Perſons who ſtrove who ſhould careſs and tickle him with the moſt fulſome Flattery, will then as earneſtly contend, who ſhall treat him with the moſt remarkable Ignominy and Contempt. Thus the great *Sejanus*, whilſt he was the Favourite of his Prince, was the Idol of the People alſo: But when he fell into Diſgrace with *Tiberius Cæſar*, then no Indignity was omitted, which their Rage and Madneſs could invent; and the moſt infamous Death was thought too

good

good for him: Then one might have heard the Crowd giving vent to the juſt reſentments of their Minds, which before fear made them ſuppreſs. Says one, I always had an ill Opinion of that Man; I thought he climb'd too high to ſtand long, and that his indirect and wicked Courſes, would one time or other meet with a juſt Reward. Says another, I was of the ſame Opinion; and though my dependance on him oblig'd me to give him ſome external Homage, and to worſhip him for the ſame reaſon, 'tis ſaid the *Indians* do the Devil; yet I could never endure him in my Heart: I always hated the Man and his Vices. But on the contrary, that Honour and Reputation which is obtain'd by a Vertuous and religious Life, is of a more durable ſtamp, and rather encreas'd than diminiſh'd by Adverſity. A time of Tryal makes the good Man's Vertues more remarkable, exerciſes his Graces, and the Furnace of Affliction purifies and refines them. A true Sterling Vertue will be honour'd and admir'd in all Conditions, in all places, and at all times. Good Men naturally love and ſpeak well of that which is Praiſe-worthy and commendable, all Love being founded in likeneſs and ſimilitude of Nature; and even wicked Men cannot but reve-

reverence that Vertue and Integrity, which they will not be at the Pains to Practiſe. And now for a concluſion of this Point, let me appeal to your Experience; whether in the ordinary Courſe of the World, Health, Riches, and Reputation are not for the moſt part the Rewards of leading a good and vertuous Life. And as Religion furniſhes us with the good things of this World: So,

2. It heightens and improves the Enjoyment of them: It enables us to take the Comfort of thoſe good things we enjoy, and makes *a little better with Righteouſneſs, than great revenues without right.* And this it performs, Prov. 16. 8.

1. By making us content with our Lot and Portion in this World, and freeing our Minds from all thoſe anxious and ſollicitous thoughts, which render the Lives of many Men uneaſie to them, who abound with every good thing which their Heart can wiſh. For the good Man believes, that all things are govern'd by a wiſe and gracious God, who beſt knows the Workmanſhip of his own hands, and what Station is moſt proper for every Man; and has furniſh'd him with ſuitable Qualifications and Endowments, and entruſted him with ſuch a Portion of this worlds Goods,

Goods, as 'tis convenient for him to manage: He is alſo well aſſured, that God is a Being of infinite Love and Kindneſs to Mankind, Truth and Faithfulneſs; and *will make all things work together for the good of thoſe that ſerve him*: So that tho' his Condition is not ſo high or great, ſo gay and ſplendid as other Mens; nay, tho' he meets with many Croſſes and Afflictions; yet he reſts very well contented and ſatisfied with it; becauſe he knows, upon the whole, 'tis that which is beſt for him.

Rom. 8. 28.

2. By giving us an Heart to take the Comfort of thoſe good things we enjoy; and laying down the wiſeſt and moſt prudent Rules and Directions how we may do ſo; and teaching us that Golden Rule of Moderation in the Enjoyment of them, which renders the good things of this world, Bleſſings indeed. For 'tis the general Unhappineſs of Mankind, that they know not how to keep a Mean; either their Deſires are too profuſe and laviſh, or elſe too narrow and bound up. How many Men in the world are there to whom God has indulg'd Health, Riches, and Honour, and all that their Hearts can wiſh; and yet has not given them the Power to eat thereof: So that they reap no other benefit by all thoſe good things, *ſaving the beholding of them with their eyes*; and whilſt

whilſt they abound in Wealth and Plenty, labour under all the Miſery, and Inconveniencies which attend the extreameſt Want and Poverty? Nay, they are the poorer for God's Liberality towards them; and as their Riches encreaſe, ſo their Deſires encreaſe with them. On the other ſide, how common is it to ſee Men drown their Parts as well as Fortunes, and render themſelves ſo ſtupid and ſottiſh, that even their Vices grow nauſeous to them? Now Religion by directing us to the end for which theſe things were given us, teaches us *to uſe the World, ſo as not to abuſe it*; to extract the Sweets out of all ſublunary Enjoyments, without incurring the danger of that Sting, which Exceſs and Debauchery leave behind them: It makes our Pleaſures durable and laſting, by teaching us the rational Enjoyment of the good things of this World, and denies us nothing which is pleaſing and diverting, but what is alſo extravagant and brutiſh. It alſo,

3. Frees us from all thoſe things which ſour the Enjoyments of Life; rooting out all irregular Paſſions, ſuch as Envy, Hatred, Malice, and Revenge; and compoſing our Minds to a calm and even Temper; diverting our Affections from things below, and ſetting them on things above:

It ſtifles the firſt riſing of our inordinate Deſires, and teaches us to lead our Lives peaceably, ſoberly, and moderately, conſidering that we live under the Eye of a Holy and All-ſeeing God. The fear of God will reſtrain the violence, and impetuouſneſs of our Paſſions, and eſtabliſh us in a juſt Empire over our ſelves, and bring our inferiour Faculties under the Dominion of Reaſon: the Love of God will produce in us a Love to all Mankind, as well Enemies as Friends, and from hence will proceed the moſt generous and comprehenſive Charity: the Senſe of our own Vileneſs and Sinfulneſs, will keep us meek and humble, and inclinable to forgive others, *Even as God for Chriſt's ſake has forgiven us.* Whereas a wicked Man is like *the troubled Sea which cannot reſt, but by reaſon* Iſa. 57, 20. *of its being toſſed to and fro, is continually caſting up mire and dirt*; Nay, he is frequently rack'd with contrary Paſſions at the ſame time, and what was the Deſcription of *Catiline*, *Alieni appetens, ſui profuſus*, may be the Character of many a wicked Man: he is covetous, but yet a lover of expenſive Vices; ambitious and Vain-glorious, and yet too proud to court popular Applauſe; quarrelſome and revengeful, but fearful and cowardly withal. Thus different Paſſions render his Life uneaſie to him,

him, and contrary Vices (like the Poets Deſcription of the four Winds blowing in a Storm) rage all at once, and Shipwrack the Comfort and Happineſs of his Soul. And as the Paſſions of the good Man are calm, ſo is his Conſcience clear: He has none of thoſe Laſhes and Girds, which diſturb the Quiet and Repoſe of every wicked Man: He has already accounted with the great Lord and Judge of the world, for his Sins and Imperfections; and ſince his Mind cannot charge him with any thing he has not repented of, he muſt needs *have Confidence towards God.* And by conſequence he is free from the dread of Death, and a future Judgment: Which take away the Comfort of the moſt proſperous Condition; for when Men live in a ſtate of Guilt, the dread of Puniſhment will follow them; *tantum metuunt, quantum nocent* (ſays *Seneca*) and the fear of Death and future Torments, will make them all their Life-time ſubject unto Bondage. It made the knees of a *Belſhazar* ſmite together, when he ſaw the Hand-writing upon the Wall; and 'twould damp the Mirth of the moſt Atheiſtical Epicure, if he knew a naked Sword hung over his Head, ready to drop down upon him. Men may talk big when their Blood is hot, and in the heighth of a debauch

Laugh at those superstitious Fools, who are scar'd with the Bug-bears of Hell-torments; but this is seldom the Subject of a morning thought: Do but use them as you do other Madmen, and keep them for some time in the dark, and they will soon regain the use of their Reason. 'Tis the peculiar Privilege of a good Man to be void of Fear: *The wicked flee when no*
Prov. 28 1. *man pursues, but the righteous is as bold as a Lyon*; he only is prepar'd against the fears of Death, and terrors of an Eternity, and chearfully resigns up his Breath into the hands of him who gave it: He looks upon Death (that King of Terrors to the wicked) as *a Messenger of Peace*, who delivers him from the Prison of his Body, and opens the Gate for him into Bliss and Immortality. Of this happy and easie departure out of this World, we have many Instances in the Holy Scripture, in whom we may consider the Power and Vertue of a good Conscience; which enabled them to lie down in their Graves, with the same quiet and composedness of Mind, they us'd to lie down in their Beds. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my*
2 Tim. 4. 8. *course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness* (says S *Paul.*) *Whose Ox, or whose Ass have I taken,*
1 Sam. 12. 3. (says *Samuel*) *whom have I defrauded, or at whose*

whoſe hands have I receiv'd a bribe? Nay, even wicked Men covet that Happineſs which they will not take the Pains to obtain. *O let me die the Death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his!* was *Balaam's* Wiſh. Numb. 23. 10.

But here I expect it will be objected, that I have conceal'd the Difficulties which attend a Holy and religious Courſe of Life; that it is a State directly oppoſite to our vicious Appetites and Inclinations, and therefore very uneaſie to Fleſh and Blood; that it enjoyns the unwelcome Duties of Mortification, Self-denial, and taking up the Croſs; that the Ordinances of Religion are tireſome and a wearineſs to the Fleſh; that the Holy Scripture tells us, That *thro' much tribulation we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God*; *That thoſe whom God loves he chaſtneth*, and *That ſtraight is the Gate, and narrow is the way that leads to Heaven and eternal Happineſs.* And if ſo, then certainly it cannot be ſo happy and pleaſant a State of Life as I have repreſented it. To which I ſhall briefly Anſwer, Acts 14. 22. Heb. 12. 6. Matth. 7. 4.

That many of thoſe Texts of Scripture, which ſpeak of the Difficulties attending a religious Courſe of Life are to be underſtood of thoſe times, when the Chriſtian Religion was perſecuted by the

Heathen Emperors of *Rome*; and the Profeſſors of it in danger of loſing their Lives for the Teſtimony of the Goſpel. It muſt be confeſs'd, That even in our Times (when Kings *are become the nurſing Fathers of the Church*) thoſe Perſons who have been long habituated to a ſinful and wicked Courſe of Life, will find it a very difficult matter to forſake it, and to give themſelves entirely up to obey the Commands of God, and the Duties of the Chriſtian Religion: But yet it may be a mighty Incouragement to conſider, That 'tis only the firſt Entrance on a religious Courſe of Life, which is attended with ſo great Difficulty; that it will become every day more and more eaſie, and at laſt pleaſant and delightful to them. When they have for ſome time accuſtom'd themſelves to it, the Comforts of a well-ſpent Life will flow in upon them, and nothing will yield them greater Satisfaction, than to be allow'd the Privilege of pouring out the Deſires of their Souls before God, and begging Supplies from him, and returning him thanks for his Bleſſings beſtow'd upon them. They will earneſtly deſire *to come and appear before God,* Pſal. 42. 1. *and as the Hart panteth after the water Brooks: ſo will their Soul pant after their God and their Redeemer.* But yet ſuppoſing

ſing, that there ſhould be ſome Difficulty in the leading of a good Life, that God ſhould ſee fit to make the Profeſſion of his Truth hazardous, and the Practice of their Duty chargeable: Yet what generous and Praiſeworthy undertaking can be perform'd without Pains and Diligence? All that is excellent and noble requires Labour and Induſtry, and the Pains Men take makes the dear-bought Bleſſing more acceptable to them. Do they not undergo much greater Difficulties for things of leſſer moment, tho' their Succeſs is ſeldom anſwerable to their Expectations? Do they not compaſs Sea and Land, leave their beſt Friends, and neareſt Relations, and dig even into the very Bowels of the Earth in queſt of Wealth; tho' for the moſt part they find a Grave, where they ſeek their Treaſure? Do they not toil and ſweat, and wade thro' a Sea of Blood in purſuit of Honour; tho' they expect no other recompence for their Pains, but a Lawrel-Wreath, or the Applauſe of the People? And ſhall not Heaven and eternal Happineſs deſerve our Care? Shall we not take as much Pains for a never fading Crown, as we do for a withering Garland? But let us ſuppoſe the greateſt Difficulties we can poſſibly imagine, in the Practice of a good and Holy Life. Suppoſe (as we are

apt to fancy) that there are *Lyons in our way to Heaven*, Mountains which cannot be remov'd by our natural Strength and Ability; yet even the moſt formidable Evils will not fright us from the Practice of Virtue and Holineſs, if we conſider,

Thirdly, That the worſt Circumſtances a good Man can be reduc'd to, are to be preferr'd before the proſperous Condition of the wicked; as will appear from theſe following Conſiderations.

1. That in the loweſt and moſt afflicted Condition the good Man enjoys the Comfort of a quiet Mind, and the Peace of a good Conſcience, which is a ſufficient Compenſation for all the Evils he can poſſibly endure in this Life. All other Evils are ſupportable, and may be undergone by a ſtable and well reſolved Mind; Prov. 18. 14. *The ſpirit of a man may bear his Infirmities, but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?* This is the only Load which is inſupportable, and is for the moſt part the Lot of the proſperous wicked Man.

2. The good Man is furniſh'd with never-failing Remedies, againſt all the Evils of this preſent Life: He is aſſur'd that all Afflictions ſhall be for the good of thoſe that ſerve God, and that God diſpoſes all things

things with the Wiſdom and Love of an indulgent Father; that the Wheels of God's Providence have an Eye within them, which always guides them to ſome wiſe end or other; *That Gods grace will be ſufficient for him*, and that he will proportion his Aſſiſtance to his Wants; ſo that if he ſhould call him out to give his Body to be burned, and to lay down his Life for his ſake; he will alſo give him ſtrength to undergo the fiery Tryal; and chearfully to praiſe him in the Flames. And, 2 Cor. 12. 9.

3. The good Man is aſſur'd, that the Evils he ſuffers will ſoon be at an end; that the time draws on apace when he ſhall be eas'd of all his Troubles, *Have all tears wiped away from his Eyes*, and receive a Hundred fold for all thoſe momentary Afflictions, he has undergone in this Life. Whilſt he endures the Croſs, his Faith ſhews him the Crown of Glory hanging over his head; and the lively Hopes of it, make him not only patient, but thankful for, and chearful under Affliction. And I am perſwaded that St. *Paul* when in Chains, and under all his Calamities and Perſecutions, was infinitely more contented than *Cæſar* or *Seneca*, than any of the moſt fortunate Princes, or wiſeſt Philoſophers amongſt the Heathens. Rev. 7.17.

From

From theſe and ſuch like Conſiderations I think it is ſufficiently evident.

1. That there is very little true Pleaſure to be found in a debauch'd and wicked Courſe of Life.

2. That the way to lead a comfortable Life even in this World, is to be vertuous and religious.

3. That the worſt Circumſtances a good Man can fall into, are to be preferr'd before the moſt proſperous Condition of the wicked.

And if ſo, then from hence we may reaſonably conclude: That Godlineſs has the Promiſes of the Life, that now is, (*i.e.*) That our Happineſs in this World is beſt ſecur'd, by leading a Holy and religious Life. It only remains; that I ſhew,

Secondly, That a Holy and religious Life fits and prepares us for everlaſting Happineſs in the world to come. And this is evident, becauſe a State of Grace, and a State of Glory only differ in degree; Grace is Glory begun; and Glory is Grace perfected and conſummated: So that every good Action and religious Duty that we perform, is a ſtep towards our everlaſting Happineſs, it both qualifies us for it, and leads us nearer to it; for by a Holy and religious Life, we Copy out the

the Perfections of the Divine Nature, and become more like God, and the nearer we reſemble him, the more we ſhall enjoy of him; in which the Happineſs of our future State doth conſiſt. 'Tis a State of perfect Purity and Holineſs, and conſiſts in repeated Acts of Love, and Zeal, and Devotion; and therefore the better fitted, and prepar'd we are in this World, by furniſhing our Souls with vertuous Habits, and thoſe Divine Qualities of Humility, Meekneſs, Charity, *&c.* the more capable we ſhall be of partaking of thoſe heavenly Pleaſures, *Which are at Gods right hand for evermore.* Our time in this World was given us for this very Purpoſe, that we might furniſh our ſelves with ſuch Vertues and Graces (thoſe wedding Garments) which will render us fit Gueſts for the Marriage of the Lamb. Pſal. 16. 11.

'Twas eaſie for me to demonſtrate that every Vertue has an influence upon our future Happineſs, and is a neceſſary Qualification, which we muſt obtain before we are capable of enjoying it: but this would take up too much time at preſent, and has been already largely treated on by an excellent hand. I ſhall therefore only remark, That nothing can be more abſurd than to frame a Notion of our future State, from the Pleaſures and Delights of our preſent *Dr. Scot in his Chriſtian Life, Part. 1.*

preſent Condition: Or, to take thoſe figurative Deſcriptions of it, which we meet with in the Holy Scripture in a literal Sence. Our Saviour Chriſt has plainly told us, That in Heaven *we ſhall neither eat nor drink, nor marry, nor be given in marriage:* A ſenſual Paradiſe might reaſonably be expected by a *Turk* or *Pagan*; but not by a *Chriſtian*; whoſe Religion teaches him to Crucifie the Fleſh with the ſinful Luſts and Deſires of the ſame. It permits him indeed the moderate uſe of the good things of this World, to render his Pilgrimage more eaſie, and his Journey to Heaven more comfortable: But yet it teaches him, that his chief Happineſs ought not to be plac'd in tranſitory Delights; that they are Joys of a more Sublime Nature, *Such as neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the heart of man to underſtand, which God hath prepared for thoſe who love and ſerve him*; ſuch Bleſſings as are agreeable to our immortal part, ſuch as the bleſſed Society of Saints and Angels, and the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, the Viſion of God; in which, our Souls (being transform'd into his Image) will be continually delighted and tranſported, in admiring and adoring the Perfections of their Creator.

Mark 12. 25.

1 Cor. 2. 9.

If

If therefore we hope to be Happy hereafter, we muſt practiſe Holineſs in this Life, *For without Holineſs no man can ſee God.* We muſt make it the buſineſs of our Lives, to keep our Paſſions within their due Bounds, and under the Government of our Reaſon; to mortifie our immoderate Appetites, and exerciſe our Graces; ſuch as Faith, Hope, Patience and Charity: This is that *Godlineſs which has the Promiſes of the Life that now is, and that which is to come.* Heb. 12. 14.

And now what remains, but that every one who hears me this day be perſwaded, to embrace this pleaſant Courſe of Life. And methinks there ſhould need no more Arguments, to prevail with you preſently to enter upon it; ſince I have already prov'd, that it is unqueſtionably both for your temporal and eternal Intereſt. For what doth God require of you, which is not highly juſt and reaſonable? What doth he command you? *But to do Juſtice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with your God,* (*i. e.*) to live up to the Dignity of your Natures, and to Act as becomes reaſonable and dependent Beings. Conſider what can you wiſh for, which is not to be obtain'd by obſerving the Precepts of Religion. *Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour,* Micah 6. 8.

Pror. 3. 16. *nour, ſhe ſhall give thy head an ornament of Grace, and a Crown of Glory. Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee, and bring thee to Honour, it ſhall be an Ornament of Grace to thy head, and as a Chain about thy neck.* What Allurement can there be in the Pleaſures of Sin, which are but for a Seaſon, and periſh even in the Enjoyment; that you ſhould prefer them before thoſe which flow from a vertuous and religious Life?

And now, may not God juſtly expoſtulate with us, as he did with the People of *Iſrael* and *Judah*? *What could I have done to my Vineyard, which I have not done unto it?* What more probable, and more rational Methods could God have taken to perſwade us to be Good, and by conſequence Happy, than he has made uſe of? He has addreſs'd himſelf both to our Hopes and Fears, he has plac'd eternal Happineſs on one hand, and eternal Miſery on the other: And moreover has ſtrow'd our way to Heaven with the good things of this Life. And now if notwithſtanding all that God has done for us we reſolve to be miſerable, and to take even Hell by force; we have nothing to blame, but our own ſtupendious Folly. We can't ſure be ſo ſilly as to imagine, that God reaps any benefit by

Iſa. 5. 4.

our

our Service; or that our Praiſes make any addition to his Glory, for as *Elihu* very well argues. *If thou ſinneſt, what doſt thou againſt him, or if thy tranſgreſſions be multiply'd, what doſt thou unto him? if thou be righteous, what giveſt thou him, or what receiveth he at thy hand? thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man.* And therefore 'tis evident, that 'tis only our Welfare God ſeeks, 'tis our Good he is ſo ſollicitous for; and as he made us at firſt, with a Deſign to communicate Happineſs unto us, ſo he ſtill retains the ſame gracious Intentions towards us. And ſhall not we be wiſe for our ſelves? Shall we willfully and obſtinately go on to defeat all the gracious Purpoſes of his Mercy and Goodneſs, to trample under feet the Blood of his dear Son, and grieve his Holy Spirits? Shall not theſe Cords of a Man be able to move us? Shall neither our eternal, nor our temporal Intereſt have any influence upon us? This would certainly be ſuch unaccountable Folly, and monſtrous Ingratitude, as no conſidering Perſon can be Guilty of. Job 35. 6.

Let me therefore beſeech you by the Mercies of God, that you preſent your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is but your reaſonable Service: Let me beg Rom. 12. 1.

and

and entreat of you, in the name, and for the ſake, of your bleſſed Lord and Redeemer, that you would ſo far conſult your own Intereſt, as to lead a pure, holy, and devout Life; which is the only way to paſs your time chearfully, and comfortably in this World: And to make ſure of everlaſting Happineſs in the world to come.

SER-

SERMON II.

PSALM CXIX. 59.

I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Teſtimonies.

THERE is nothing which with greater Reaſon hath excited the Admiration of *conſiderate* Men, than the ill Entertainment which Religion and its Profeſſors have found in the World: For its Precepts are ſo rational, ſo eaſie, ſo much for the good of Mankind in the general, and the Contentment, and Satisfaction of every particular Perſon, even in this World, that they would be every wiſe Man's Choice, were they not his Duty. And yet, beſides the internal goodneſs and conveniency of thoſe Commands, God has been pleas'd to lay upon us, he has inforc'd them with many powerful Motives; he has denounc'd many dreadful Puniſhments againſt thoſe Perſons who diſobey them; Puniſhments ſo intolerable, that they are not to be conceiv'd, e-

ven by thoſe who muſt undergo them: He has propos'd many excellent Rewards to thoſe who comply with them; ſuch *as neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entred into the heart of man to underſtand.* Theſe things being duly *weigh'd and conſider'd,* one would think the Chriſtian Religion could not miſs of a candid Reception; but that all Men to whom theſe *joyful Tidings* came would ſoon become its Proſelytes; and that it was impoſſible for us to be Men, (*i. e.* reaſonable and thoughtful Beings) and not be Chriſtians.

And yet our Experience convinces us to the contrary; 'tis viſible to every inquiſitive Obſerver, that Piety decays, Devotion grows cold in our Age, and thoſe who live under the beſt Laws, are moſt tainted with Vice, and moſt diſſolute in their Manners. There are many indeed who are entred into the Church of Chriſt by Baptiſm, who wear his Badge, and make profeſſion of his Religion; but there are few, very few, who obey his Commands, and live by thoſe Rules he has laid down in his Holy Goſpel.

Now amongſt the many Cauſes which concur to produce this ſtrange Effect, there is none which is aſſign'd with more appearance of Reaſon, than the want of Conſi-

Conſideration, that general Stupidity, and careleſs Temper which has ſeiz'd the generality of Mankind. Moſt Men are ſo taken up with the earneſt purſuit after Riches, Honours, or Pleaſures; with the Buſineſs of their Callings, and the Cares of this Life; that they ſeldom think of a Life to come, or conſider what their Condition will be hereafter: Nay, the very thoughts of their Mortality, and Conſideration that they muſt ſhortly leave this World, ſeem as unwelcome to them, as Death it ſelf; for *did we but frequently and ſeriouſly think on our ways, we ſhould turn our feet unto God's Teſtimonies.*

From which words I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

Firſt, What is meant by *thinking on our Ways.*

Secondly, What the Conſequences would be of a due performance of this Duty: *We ſhould turn our feet unto God's Teſtimonies.*

Firſt, What is meant by *thinking on our Ways. Way* is a Metaphor very often made uſe of in the Holy Scripture, to ſignifie the whole Courſe of a Mans Life: The time of our continuance in this World, is very fitly ſet out by a Journey or Pilgri-

mage; 'tis begun at our Birth, and every moment which passes afterwards, is as it were a step which brings us nearer our Long-home.

By *Thinking on our ways* may be meant, Either, 1. A comparing a vertuous and religious Course of Life, with a vicious and debauch'd one; a considering what Pleasures and Conveniencies each of them affords, what Effects they produce, and a determining within our selves, whether 'tis best and most for our Interest, to take up with the Pleasures and Advantages, the Pomps and Vanities of the world; or to live an honest, sober, and devout Life, tho' attended with many Troubles and Afflictions, and expos'd to many Sufferings; but this has been the Subject of a former Discourse: Or else, 2. The *Thinking on our Ways* may denote, a Reflection on our own particular Actions, a Calling our selves to a strict Account, and examining our Consciences; whether we have liv'd up to the Rule of God's word, and from thence concluding, what the present State of our Soul is, and what Expectations we may reasonably entertain, of being Happy hereafter.

Sermon the First.

And if we take these Words of my Text, *I thought on my Ways*, in this last Sence, then they imply these three things.

First,

First, A ſetting apart ſome time to recollect our ſelves, and to conſider what the paſt Actions of our Lives have been.

Secondly, A comparing our Actions with the Rule of God's word.

Thirdly, A ſerious Reſolution to perſevere in that which is good, and to reform what is amiſs.

And that we may be prevail'd with to put theſe things in Practice, and perform them with the better Succeſs, I ſhall ſhew,

I. How neceſſary 'tis for every one, who deſigns to lead a Holy and Religious Life, thus to *conſider his ways.*

II. I ſhall ſhew, after what manner we ought to perform this Duty.

III. What excellent Effects a due performance of it would have upon our Lives and Converſations. We ſhould *turn our feet unto God's Teſtimonies.*

First, How neceſſary 'tis for every one, who deſigns to lead a Holy and Religious Life, *to conſider his Ways.*

And this is evident, 1. Becauſe 'tis ſo frequently enjoyn'd us in the Holy Scripture. The God who made us, and is beſt acquainted with our Frame and Diſpoſitions, and what means will be moſt uſeful

to enable us to walk in the way of his Commandments; frequently exhorts us, to look back into our paſt Lives, to conſider the Nature and Quality of our Actions, by comparing them with his Holy Word, and from thence to paſs a Judgment upon them; and if we find we have done amiſs, to repent and do ſo no more. In the 4th. *Pſalm*, *Verſe* the 4th. the Pſalmiſt adviſes us, *Commune with your own heart upon your Bed, and be ſtill.* Upon which words St. *Chryſoſtom* thus Dictates; ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῷ μετὰ τὰ δεῖπνα, ὥσπερ ἂν πρὸς ὕπνον ἀπίητε ἢ μηδενὸς παρόντος, &c. That is, before you compoſe your ſelf to Sleep, Summon a Court of Judicature in your own Conſcience, and exact a ſevere Account of your ſelf: Conſider what wicked Purpoſes and Deſigns you have harbour'd, and how many of theſe have taken Effect: Arraign and condemn your ſelf for thoſe Sins, and reſolve that you will never be Guilty of them any more.

1 Cor. 11. 31. εἰ ἑαυτὸς διεκρινόμεθα *if we would diſcern or diſtinguiſh our ſelves.*

St. *Paul* tells us, That *if we would judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged, i. e.* we ſhould avoid thoſe Sins, which bring the Divine Judgments upon us: And the ſame Advice is couch'd in thoſe Parables, *Luk.* 14. 28, 29. and the following Verſes; *For which of you intending to build a Tower ſitteth not down firſt, and computeth the coſt,*

coſt, whether he hath ſufficient to finiſh it? Leaſt happily after he have laid the foundation, and is not able to finiſh it, all that behold him begin to mock him ſaying, This man began to build, and was not able to finiſh. Or, What King going to make War againſt another King, ſitteth not down firſt, and conſulteth whether he be able with ten thouſand to meet him, that cometh againſt him with twenty thouſand; or elſe whilſt the other is yet a great way off, he ſendeth an Embaſſage, and deſireth Conditions of Peace. So likewiſe whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he has, he cannot be my Diſciple. The meaning of both theſe Parables is this: That every one who intends to be Chriſt's Diſciple, muſt firſt ſit down and conſider with himſelf, what 'tis to be a Chriſtian, what Difficulties he is like to meet with in his Chriſtian Race, what Temptations he muſt encounter withal: And if he doth not ſincerely Purpoſe to forego every thing which ſtands in Competition with Chriſt and his Goſpel, if he doth not reſolve to part with all that he has, rather than deny his Saviour, he can never be Chriſt's true Diſciple.

And as we ought to make ſuch Reflections as theſe, before we enter on a Chriſtian Courſe of Life; ſo when we have made ſome Progreſs in it, it will be ne-

ceſſary to examine and try our ſelves, how well we have put theſe good Reſolutions into Execution: Whether we have acquitted our ſelves like Chriſt's faithful Souldiers and Servants, or elſe cowardly left the Field, and deſerted his Colours. And therefore we are ſo often commanded to *examine our ſelves whether we be in the Faith, and to prove our own ſelves.* And St. *Paul* adviſes the *Galatians*, *Let every man prove his own work.* The word us'd in both places in the Original, ſignifies ſo to prove or to try, as that a Man's Actions may be throughly known and approved, ſifted and made evident: And that ſuch an Examination as this will be of great uſe to promote our ſpiritual Well-being, is evident.

1 Cor. 3. 13. δοκιμάσει. Gal. 6. 4. δοκιμαζέτω.

2. From *Reaſon.* Common Senſe and Reaſon will inform us, that if we deſign to direct our Lives by the word of God, we muſt frequently compare them with this Rule: We muſt reflect upon our Actions, and conſider, when we have done our Duty and acted as becomes us, and when we have tranſgreſs'd the Commands of God. For in the firſt place, the beſt Men in the world are ſubject to many ſinful Paſſions; and tho' they make never ſo ſtrong Reſolutions, tho' they could ſet the Faculties of their Souls in the moſt exact Order,

Order, yet when they go abroad into the World, they will meet with ſomething or other which will ruffle and diſcompoſe them, and betray them into diſorderly Affections, and ſinful Practices. There is no Man in the world ſo good and perfect, but he has his Failings, his Weakneſſes, and Infirmities: And the Devil will be ſure to aſſault him on that ſide, where he lies moſt open to Temptation, and will ſometimes prevail againſt him: And therefore the wiſeſt Courſe a good Man can take, is frequently to recollect himſelf, to conſider, when and where he has done amiſs, what was the occaſion of it, what betray'd him into that ſinful and fooliſh Action; and having diſcover'd this, heartily to repent of his Sin, to fence and guard himſelf againſt it for the time to come, and to reſolve ſtedfaſtly, never to ſuffer himſelf to be impos'd on and deluded again, in the like manner.

In the next place there are many Actions, which at firſt ſight appear to us, good and Praiſe-worthy; which when more narrowly conſider'd, and try'd by the Rule of God's word, are found to be crooked and deform'd, ſuch as we have juſt cauſe to repent of. We place them at firſt in a wrong Light, we behold them thro' a falſe *Medium*: Our Kindneſs and Affe-

ction

ction toward them, makes them ſeem of a different Complexion than they are really of: But when we come to conſider them without Paſſion or Prejudice, to weigh every Circumſtance; Then 'tis plainly evident, that we admire our ſelves for Qualities which are not in us, and applaud our ſelves for Actions which are nothing worth: We perform'd them either out of a wrong End, or they proceeded from a falſe Principle, or we were deficient in the Manner of tranſacting them: So neceſſary is it to *conſider our Ways*, and to bring our Actions, to the Touch-ſtone of God's word; even thoſe Actions which we eſteem moſt Holy and Perfect. For our Righteouſneſſes, the moſt regular Acts of our Lives, our moſt Affectionate and fervent Devotions, are ſtain'd with Sin; and want that Purity and Integrity, which God requires in them; they are deriv'd either from Self-love, or Pride, or deſire of Honour, or love of Gain, from fear of Damage, or diſcredit in the World; rather than out of Love and Reverence, and Gratitude towards God; Charity and Good-will towards our Neighbour; or a ſober regard to our own true Welfare and Happineſs. And though God has Promiſed to pardon thoſe Sins, and to paſs by that Obliquity of our Actions, which proceeds

ceeds from the frailty and infirmity of our Natures; yet he expects that we ſhould repent of them, (*i. e.*) That we ſhould confeſs and forſake them, expreſs our Sorrow for what we have done, and reſolve to Act better for the future, which can never be perform'd without a ſevere Examination of our Hearts, and calling our ſelves to a particular Account; how and wherein we have offended.

But farther; the abſolute neceſſity of Examining our ſelves, will appear from this Conſideration; That the greateſt part of our time is ſpent amidſt the noiſe and hurry of the World; our Thoughts are taken up chiefly in the buſineſs of our Callings, in providing for our Families which is ſo far from being a Fault, that 'tis highly commendable and Praiſe-worthy (for God is better pleas'd with a Man, who is diligent and induſtrious in that Calling and Station he has plac'd him in, than he would be, if he were continually upon his knees, performing one uninterrupted Act of Devotion; and this I am induc'd to believe, for this one plain Reaſon, becauſe all the Devotional parts of our Religion were chiefly intended, to help and aſſiſt us, in the Practice of thoſe Duties which God requires of us in our ſeveral Relations.) But yet, ſeeing ſo much

of

of our time is ſpent in the buſineſs of this Life, ſo many of our thoughts taken up with our worldly Affairs, we muſt needs judge it highly reaſonable that we ſhould ſet apart ſome time to retire into the Cloſet of our Breaſt, and frequently conſider what State and Condition our better and more Spiritual part is in; what Sins we have been guilty of; and whether we go forward or backward in the Ways of Vertue and Religion. Every prudent Man, and good Husband, doth this in his ſecular Concerns, he that deſigns either to keep or encreaſe his Eſtate, makes it his firſt and chiefeſt Care, to be exact in keeping his Accounts, to Balance them often, and to inform himſelf what proportion his Incomes bear with his Expences: And thus careful and diligent we ſhould be in our ſpiritual Affairs, if we had but the ſame Value for our immortal Souls, which we have for the fading Goods of this World; this would ſuperſede my Labour of proving to you, the abſolute and indiſpenſable neceſſity, which lies upon every one to continue in the Practice of this Duty.

And in truth, this has been the uſage of good and vertuous Men in all Ages of the world; not only of thoſe whoſe Examples are recommended to our Imitation

in

in the *Holy Scripture*; but alſo of thoſe Heathens, who have been eminent for Vertue and Morality. The Pſalmiſt tells us, That he us'd conſtantly to call himſelf to an Account. *I call to remembrance my ſong in the night, I commune with my own heart, and my ſpirit made diligent ſearch.* Pſal. 77. 6. Amongſt the Fathers of the Primitive Church, we find all thoſe who wrote upon practical Subjects preſſing this Duty of Self-examination: The time would fail me, ſhould I inſtance in the Precepts of St. *Chryſoſtom*, *Baſil*, *Gregory* and the reſt. Neither were the Heathen Moraliſts wanting in the recommendation of it, both by Precept and their own Examples: That Precept of *Pythagoras* in his golden Verſes is generally known.

Πῆ παρέβην, τί δ' ἔρεξα; τί μοὶ δέον οὐκ ἐτελέσθη. Ask thy ſelf (ſays he) every Night, What Sin have I committed this day? What Good have I done? What Good have I left undone, which I ought to have done? *Seneca* tells us, *Quotidie apud me cauſam dico*, I every day paſs Judgment upon my own Actions: when I am in Bed, and the Light is taken away, I run over all my Words and Deeds, I conſider how I have ſpent that day, I omit nothing which I can recollect; for why ſhould I be afraid to reflect on my own Fa.lings,

Failings, when I can ſay to my ſelf, this was not well done, but do ſo no more? He alſo tells us of his Friend *Sixtus* the Philoſopher, who duly thus examin'd himſelf, before he went to reſt: What Diſeaſe of thy Soul, or what Vice haſt thou cur'd this day? What Sin haſt thou ſubdu'd? Art thou a better Man to day, than thou waſt yeſterday? If ſo, thou haſt liv'd to ſome Purpoſe; but if not, thou haſt but conſum'd and loſt thy time. And to name no more, the Divine *Plato*, when he ſaw any Man do a wicked or unbecoming Action, us'd to ask himſelf this Queſtion, μὴ πού ἄρ' ἐγὼ τοῦτο; have I never been guilty of this Crime? If this Sin looks ſo ill in that Man, is it not worſe in me? If I have never been guilty of it, let me be ſure to avoid it for the time to come.

I might eaſily heap up many like Inſtances, for this has been the Practice of good and vertuous Men in all Ages; and in truth 'tis hardly poſſible for a Man to be good and vertuous, who omits or neglects the Performance of it. And therefore, I ſhall take this for granted: And proceed,

Secondly, To lay down ſome Directions, how we may perform this Duty to the beſt advantage. And, 1. When

1. When we deſign to perform this Duty of Self-examination, let us firſt free our Minds from all the Cares and Buſineſs of Life, from every thing which will take up our Thoughts; and apply our ſelves to this Task with ſeriouſneſs and attention: For ſince the Intereſts of this World, and the next are widely different, it will be impoſſible to attend on the one, whilſt our Thoughts are taken up about the other: And we may as well fix our Eye upon two oppoſite Objects at the ſame time, as keep our apprehenſive Faculty intent both on Things temporal, and Things ſpiritual.

When we have cleans'd and purg'd our Souls, from all carnal and worldly Thoughts, and Affections; let us beſeech God, from whom are *the Preparations of the heart*, that he will enable us impartially to examin and ſearch into our own Souls; enlighten our Underſtandings, aſſiſt our Memories, and diſcover to us thoſe Sins which lie hid in our Conſciences, and *teach us thoſe things we know not*; which either we never took notice of, or which we have forgot: That we may have the ſame apprehenſions of them at preſent, we ſhall hereafter be affected with, when we come to lie upon a Sick-bed, and to have a Proſpect of the other World.

Having

Having thus fitted and prepared our ſelves, let us conſider how, and after what manner we muſt Examine our ſelves: And,

I. The time when we ought to employ our ſelves about this Duty.

II. What ought to be the Subject of our Examination. And,

1. As to the time when this Duty will be moſt ſeaſonably perform'd, I have already made it appear, That it has been the Practice of good Men in all Ages, to examine themſelves daily; and this with very good Reaſon: For ſince Confeſſion of Sin is one Condition, which God requires of us, before he will Seal the pardon of our Sins, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould make a full and particular Confeſſion of them, unleſs we examine our ſelves daily. The number of our Sins is ſo great, that ſhould we defer it till a farther time, many of them would ſlip out of our Memories; and then God has reveal'd to us, no other Condition of Pardon, but that general Confeſſion of them, *cleanſe thou me from my ſecret Sins*; and how can we call thoſe Sins *ſecret*, which are conceal'd from us, only becauſe we will not take the Pains to diſcover them?

Pſal. 19. 12.

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What time of the day is moſt proper for this Employment, every Man's Prudence muſt determine, this muſt be directed by the Exigency of his Affairs: but for the moſt part it will be requiſite even in this Caſe, to follow the Advice of the wiſe Man, *In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening with-hold not thy hand.* To conſider in the Morning, what Temptations we are like to meet with that day, what opportunities of doing good, and making the moſt ſtrong and firm Reſolutions, that we will reſiſt the one, and embrace the other: And to call our ſelves to account in the Evening, how well we have put theſe Reſolutions into Execution, whether *we have perform'd our vows unto God*, or elſe ſhamefully given up his Cauſe, and yielded to the importunity of a prevailing Temptation. Eccleſ. 11. 6.

But beſides this daily Examination of our ſelves, there are other times when we ought to call our ſelves to an Account: 'Tis the great Duty of the Lord's Day; A Day ſet apart on purpoſe, that thoſe Perſons who all the week long are cumber'd with the Cares of this world, employ'd in the Buſineſs of their Callings, and in making proviſion for their Bodies, might have ſome time to recollect themſelves, and to ſecure the eternal Welfare

of their Souls. And how can Men employ this day better? (I mean that part of it, when they are not call'd upon to joyn in the publick Offices of Religion) than in recollecting themſelves, how they have ſpent the week paſt, what Sins they have been guilty of, what good Actions they have perform'd, what Progreſs they have made in a holy and vertuous Life; and in conſidering what Temptations they are like to be expos'd to the following Week, and in taking up Reſolutions of walking more ſtrictly and more circumſpectly; and that by the aſſiſtance of God's Grace, they will yield a more exact obedience to his Commands. This ought to be the Buſineſs of every Lord's Day, and every Day hallowed and ſet apart for the Worſhip of God; but more particularly of thoſe times, when we intend to prepare our ſelves for the receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: Then it behoves us to make a more *diligent ſearch* into our Lives and Converſations, that we retain no *Leaven of Malice and Hypocriſie*, no evil thing unrepented of, which may deprive us of the Benefits of this bleſſed Ordinance. Next to the time, let us conſider:

2. The Subject of our Examination. And here let us make an exact Scrutiny into all the thoughts and intents

tents of our Hearts, the words of our Lips, and the Actions of our Lives. Concerning our thoughts, let us ask our ſelves ſuch Queſtions as theſe. What is it that I moſt think upon? Are my Thoughts ſerious, ſeaſonable, and pure? Are my Inclinations compliant with God's Law? What doth moſt eaſily ſtir me, and how is my heart moved? Are my Affections calm, and orderly, and well plac'd? What Plots do I contrive? What Projects am I driving on? Are my Deſigns good? Are my Intentions upright and ſincere? Concerning our Words, let us demand thus. Have I learn'd *to keep my tongue as it were with a bridle*, to refrain from all manner of evil Speeches, and to imploy it to that uſe for which it was deſign'd, *viz.* to glorifie God, and to communicate the Thoughts of our hearts one to another? As to our Actions; let us firſt enquire, whether they are good and agreeable to the Rule of God's Word; and then let us reaſon thus with our ſelves: This Action was indeed well done, but might I not have done better? might I not have brought more Glory to God, and procur'd more good for my Neighbour? Was not this good Action imperfect as to ſome Particulars? Was I not too blame as to ſome Circumſtances? And if ſo, let us reſolve, That if ever God puts ano- Pſal. 39. 1.

ther opportunity into our hands of performing the ſame Action again, we will mend theſe Defects, and be wiſer and better for the future: But on the other hand, if upon comparing our Actions, with the Rule of God's word, we find they have been evil and diſagreeable to it; then let us ſay thus to our ſelves, I have done this wicked Act, and hereby offended my good God; but what benefit or advantage have I got for my ſelf? Doth not that trouble and remorſe of Conſcience which I feel for the Commiſſion of this ſin, much exceed the Pleaſure I took in it? Is it not a very fooliſh thing to purchaſe ſo little, ſo momentary a Pleaſure, at the expence of the Quiet and Repoſe of my Mind, a good Conſcience here, and eternal Happineſs hereafter.

And that we may have a true and laſting Senſe of the evil Nature of our Sins, let us conſider the ſeveral aggravating Circumſtances which attend them: Perhaps the Crime which we committed was done with Deliberation; perhaps in deſpight to the Checks of our Conſcience, and the bleſſed Motions of God's holy Spirit; perhaps it has been frequently repeated, and we ſtill continue to go on in it, notwithſtanding the many Calls to Repentance, and the many Vows and Reſolutions

ons we have made of leaving and forſaking it. Theſe and many more are the aggravating Circumſtances, whereby our Sins are render'd more heinous, and *more exceeding ſinful.* Thus the Treaſon of *Judas* was a Sin of the deeper die, becauſe he was one of Chriſt's *familiar Friends and Diſciples*, who convers'd with him, and did *eat of his Bread:* And *Solomon*'s Idolatry did offend God the more, becauſe *his heart was turned from the Lord, who appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this very thing, that he ſhould not go aſtray after other Gods.* 1 Kin. 11. 9.

Theſe are the ſteps by which we ought to proceed in the Examination of our ſelves: Which when we have perform'd, that we may make a right Judgment of the State of our Souls; let us take a review of what we have done, and compare our preſent Condition, with our former Courſe of Life; and then let us conſider with our ſelves, whether we grow in Grace, whether our vertuous Habits and Reſolutions are more rooted and confirm'd, or elſe whether we loſe ground, and *become barren and unfruitful in every good work.* 2 Pet. 1. 8.

And here that we may not be miſtaken, I ſhall interpoſe one Caution; that the Standard of our improvement in holy Living, and growth in Grace, is not to

be taken from the Affections: Theſe for the moſt part are moſt vigorous and lively, when we firſt enter upon a religious Courſe of Life; we are then ſooneſt warm'd and rais'd up into Extaſies, and Raptures of Devotion; eſpecially in our tender years, when our Paſſions bear the greateſt ſway in us, and captivate our Reaſon: but as we grow in years, theſe heats languiſh and decay, and as our Reaſon and Judgment improve, we are leſs Subject to theſe Tranſports of our Affections; and proceed in a ſteady and regular Courſe of Piety and Vertue: And therefore the beſt way to make a right Judgment of our ſpiritual Improvements, is to conſider; whether we live up more exactly to the Rules of our Duty? Whether we yield a more ready Obedience to the Laws of the Goſpel, than we have formerly done? whether we have left off any of our evil Practices, and bid adieu to our beloved Sins? whether we have brought our ſelves to ſuffer Affliction patiently, to reſign up our Wills to the Divine Will more contentedly? Theſe are the moſt certain Signs by which we may beſt judge of our Improvements in Grace.

And if we find that we do indeed grow better and better, then in the next place; let us endeavour to call to mind, by what means

means we have made theſe Improvements: What Motives and Inducements moſt wrought upon us? What Rules and Directions were moſt uſeful: What Company and examples were moſt alluring? *And then let us walk by the ſame Rule, let us mind the ſame things.* Phil. 3. 16. But if on the other hand we find that we decline in Vertue and Piety, that our Sins (thoſe Sons of *Anak*) have been too hard for us, and that we have been guilty of many hainous and preſumptuous Crimes; then let us carefully weigh and conſider, what it was which betray'd us into theſe Sins; how we came to be prevail'd with, to do ſuch fooliſh and unreaſonable Actions; Actions which are both diſpleaſing to God, and unbecoming the Dignity of our Natures, and that rank of Being which we hold in the world; by what means and methods did the Devil (that old Serpent) wind himſelf into our Souls? with what bait did he allure us? under what ſpecious ſhews did he repreſent his Temptations? which was our weak ſide that firſt yielded to the Aſſault? what were the occaſions and inducements of our falling into Sin? And when we have found out theſe, let us make ſolemn Vows and Reſolutions, that for the time to come we will be more vigilant and watchful, that we will *reſiſt the Devil,*

Jam. 4. 7. *and then he will flee from us,* and never again *return to folly:* But that we will take
Eph. 6. 11. to our ſelves *the whole Armour of a Chriſtian, wherewith we ſhall be enabled to ſtand in the day of Tryal, and remain Chriſt's faithful Souldiers and Servants to our Lives end.*

And to conclude all, let us beg of God, to give us his Grace and Aſſiſtance, that we may do ſo. And if we thus pray, and thus do; then we ſhall certainly reap thoſe bleſſed Fruits and Effects, which will naturally flow from a due performance of this Duty; *We ſhall turn our feet unto God's Teſtimonies.*

To ſhew what theſe Fruits and Effects are, is the Third and laſt Head I propoſe to Diſcourſe upon.

1. A due Examination of our ſelves would keep our Conſciences tender. 'Tis morally impoſſible for a Man to go on in the habitual Practice of any known Sin, who daily calls himſelf to Account for his Actions; who diſtinctly and ſeriouſly conſiders in what Particulars he has offended God, and what has been the Effect and Conſequence of doing ſo: For Vice is in it ſelf ſo ugly and deformed, ſo deſtructive to our true Intereſt, even in this Life; and Vertue ſo lovely and amiable, that no Man

Man who ſees them both barefac'd, but muſt needs hate and deteſt the firſt, and cloſe with, and embrace the latter. 'Tis want of Conſideration which betrays Men into ſinful and fooliſh Practices: When the Mind is blinded either with Paſſion or Senſuality, then it becomes a Prey to every vile Luſt: And therefore God is ſaid to come unto Men *in a ſtill voice, and in the cool of the day*, when they are capable of hearkening to the Dictates of Reaſon, and to weigh and conſider things: But the Devil appears in Storms and Tempeſts, and hurries Men on into Ruin. When he has once engag'd them in any evil Practice, he will not ſuffer them to take any reſt, to ſit down and look back upon what they have done, but carries them on, from one degree of wickedneſs to another, till at laſt they have neither Will nor Power to repent. For the Sinner at firſt is timorous and baſhful; his Conſcience is ſeiz'd with Fears and Doubts, miſ-givings and relentings, it accuſes, condemns and puniſhes him for his Crimes, and performs the part of God's Vicegerent in his Soul, whilſt he is attentive to it, and continues to live under its Government, and ſubmits himſelf to its Diſcipline: But when he turns a deaf ear to its Admonitions, and withdraws himſelf from its Obe-

1 Kin. 19. 12. Gen. 3. 8.

Obedience, when he is so much taken up with the specious shews and appearances of sensual Pleasure from without, that he has no leisure to hearken to the Voice of this heavenly Monitor from within: Then Sin that strong Man takes possession of his Heart, Rules and Domineers there, and he is given up by degrees to hardness of Heart, and a reprobate Mind. Whereas were but this one Rule, *Of a daily Examination of our selves*, conscientiously practis'd, Men might have some struglings and fightings within them, their deprav'd Nature might sometimes prevail against them, but they would never become habitually debauch'd; Ἡ ψυχὴ δεδοικυῖα τὴν ἑσπερινὴν δίκην, μὴ πάλιν ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὴν μαστιχθῇ ὀκνηροτέρα γίνεται περὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, says the Father: That is, the Consideration what smart Men have formerly endur'd for their Sins, will make them fearful of committing the same again: And the Thoughts that they must give a speedy account of their Actions, not only to God in the other world, but to their own Consciences in this, would engage them so to govern their Actions, that they may have no reason to blush at, or repent of them. The Pleasure of reflecting on their good Deeds, would be a most powerful allurement to persevere in well-doing; and

St. Chrys. in Psal. 4.

and the farther they walk in the Paths of Vertue, they will take the greater Pleaſure and Delight in them.

2. From a daily Examination of our ſelves would flow Peace of Mind, and a comfortable perſwaſion and aſſurance, that we are in God's Favour, and under his Protection; *for if our Minds condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* 1 Joh. 3. 21. If we have repented of our Sins, and made our Peace with God, we need not fear what Men or Devils can do unto us. Fear is generally the effect of Guilt, and a Conſciouſneſs that we deſerve Puniſhment for our evil Deeds: But when by a due Examination of our ſelves, we have ſet Accounts right between God and our Souls; when we have found out thoſe *accurſed things* which make God our Enemy, *and hewn theſe Amalakites in pieces before the Lord*; then have we good grounds *to truſt in the Lord, and to ſtay our ſelves upon our God.* And God has promiſ'd, that he will *keep that Man's Mind in perfect Peace, whoſe Soul is ſtayed on him.* 1 Sam. 15. 33. Iſay 50. 10. Iſa. 26. 3.

3. A daily Examination of our ſelves will encreaſe our Charity, and incline us to entertain the moſt favourable Opinions of other Men. We ſhall eſpy ſo many, and ſo great Faults in our ſelves, that we ſhall

ſhall have neither a Deſire nor leiſure to pore upon thoſe of our Neighbour; and the Conſideration how much need we have of Forgiveneſs, will render us more willing to overlook or pardon thoſe Offences which are committed againſt us; and will teach us to *forgive others*, even as we hope, *that God for Chriſt's ſake will forgive us.*

Mark 11. 25.

4. Self-Examination would make us truly ſenſible of God's Patience and Long-ſuffering, who ſtill extends his Mercy and Forgiveneſs towards us, notwithſtanding our manifold and daily Provocations: He is more ready to Pardon than we are to Repent, and kindly meets and receives all ſuch as return unto him.

The time would fail me, ſhould I recapitulate all the Benefits and bleſſed Effects, which would flow from a conſcientious diſcharge of this Duty. It would be of uſe to us at all times, and in all Conditions. It would keep us humble in Proſperity, ſupport us in Adverſity; it would enable us to ſubdue our Paſſions, and moderate our Appetites; it would take away the ſting of Death, and make our Departure out of this World eaſie and comfortable.

In ſhort, it would be of excellent uſe to ſweeten the Comforts of Life to us, and help

help us to obtain everlaſting Happineſs in the world to come.

And now I think 'tis plain, *That a frequent Examining our Lives and Converſations*, is a Duty enjoyn'd us by God; practis'd by Men eminent for Piety and Vertue, both Chriſtians and Heathens; agreeable to Reaſon; and of admirable uſe in all the various Exigences of Life; and that moſt of the Miſ-carriages, Sins, and Follies, which we are guilty of, do proceed from the Neglect and Omiſſion of it.

What then remains, but that we go and put this plain and eaſie Rule in Practiſe; and ſo *think on our Ways, as to turn our feet unto God's Teſtimonies. Which God of his Mercy grant for the ſake of our bleſſed Redeemer, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

SER-

SERMON III.

2 TIM. III. 5.

Having a form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power; from ſuch turn away.

THIS *know* (ſaith St. *Paul* Ver. 1.) *That in the laſt days, perilous times ſhall come becauſe of the wickedneſs of Men*; (as he goes on in the ſecond Verſe) *for Men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, proud, boaſters, blaſphemers*, and all which he comprehends under one Character in the words of the Text, *Having a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power.* And this is the chief Reaſon why the times would be ſo perilous, becauſe the greateſt part of theſe wicked Perſons, ſhould conceal their Crimes under a *Form and ſhew of Godlineſs*. Were they profeſſedly and openly wicked, there were ſome Ingenuity even in their Impudence, becauſe they could not

not be tax'd or upbraided with Hypocriſie: Were they *covetous*, *proud*, *blaſphemers*, without a ſhew of Zeal, and pretence of Religion, then all Men might plainly diſcern and detect them; *and from an open Enemy, I would have hid my ſelf* (ſays *David.*) Shelves and Quickſands that have Lights always burning to diſcover them by, are the more eaſily avoided, and we are forewarn'd againſt the Dog that barks firſt: But theſe Deceivers of whom St. *Paul* ſpeaks, have a fair and glorious outſide, tho' they are foul within: Theſe workers of Iniquity cry, *Lord, Lord*, and are great Profeſſors of Religion: They put on the *Form of Godlineſs*, tho' they *deny the Power thereof*; and therefore they have the greater Sin. From hence it is, that they are the more dangerous Company, and we have the greater Reaſon to obſerve the Caution laid down in the Text; *from ſuch turn away. Having a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power; from ſuch turn away.* Pſal. 55. 12.

From theſe words I ſhall ſhew,

I. What is here meant by *Godlineſs*, what by a *Form*, and what by the *Power* of it.

II. That we may have a *Form* without the *Power of Godlineſs*.

III. How

III. How we may discover, whether we have the *Power of Godliness*, or else only the *Form* of it.

IV. And Lastly, how far we must *turn away* from such as have only the *Form*, but not the *Power of Godliness*.

1. What is here meant by *Godliness*, what by a *Form*, and what by the *Power* of it.

Godliness in the Original εὐσέβεια, is a devout and sincere Worship of the only true God, in Spirit and in Truth, both inwardly and outwardly, according to his Word: Or to describe it more fully and expressly, 'Tis *an earnest Love of God, out of a pure Heart, and a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned*, whereby we are incited to glorifie God, and to do good towards Men: So that in this one word is imply'd our whole Duty towards God and Man. This is express'd by St. *Paul*, by *leading a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honesty*. This is that *Godliness which is profitable unto all things, and has the Promises of the Life that now is, and that which is to come*. By *a Form of Godliness* is meant an outward Resemblance, a colourable shew, or likely appearance of *Godliness*, when a Man puts on the Face and outside of Religion, Acts and Mimicks it so

1 Tim. 1. 5.

1 Tim. 2. 2.

1 Tim. 4. 8.

ſo well, as to deceive and impoſe upon thoſe, who converſe with him; who judging according to the outward appearance believe him to be an honeſt, holy, and religious Man, tho' in truth he is nothing leſs: He may not only deceive others, but delude himſelf alſo, and be confidently perſwaded, that he is the Child of God, and one of the chief Favourites of Heaven, when indeed he is a Servant of the Devil, and a Firebrand of Hell. And in truth, the *Form* muſt be like the Pattern, or elſe it is no *Form* at all; for we do not ſay a Picture or Statue, is ſuch a Man's Picture or Statue, unleſs it bears a lively Reſemblance of his Looks and Perſon. Thus a *Form of Godlineſs* muſt be ſuch a ſhew and outſide of Religion, as is of the ſame hew and complection with true Religion, and a lively Portraicture of it; tho' in many Reſpects it falls ſhort of the *Power of Godlineſs*; which implies that Force and Efficacy, that internal Principle and Spring of Action, which is well expreſs'd by the Greek word ἐνέργεια, whereby a Man is made (as St. *Paul* ſays) *An example of Believers, in word, in Converſation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity; and has the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, teaching him to deny ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly,* 1 Tim. 4. 12.

berly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world. If a Man has Charity in Converſation, Faith and Purity in Spirit, ſo as to deny all worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly in himſelf, and righteouſly towards others, and godly towards his Maker and Redeemer: Then is his Soul and Body entirely ſubject to the Croſs of Chriſt; then his *Form of Godlineſs* proceeds from the *Power* of it: And this is that *Power of Godlineſs* which works mightily unto Salvation. And this *Power of God* is moſt evidently ſeen, in reducing the moſt Stiff-neck'd and Hard-hearted Sinners; in prevailing with them to leave their beloved Sins and boſom Vices; and in beating down, and ſubduing the moſt ſtubborn and unruly Paſſions, ſuch as Pride, Envy, Malice, and Revenge, thoſe Sins our corrupt Nature is moſt ſubject to, and in making ſo great a Change in us, that we do not ſeem to be the ſame Men. The Lyon becomes a Lamb, and the Serpent a Dove, a natural Man, a Man wholly Spiritual, and a Servant of the Devil, a Child of God. He aims at new ends, Acts by new Principles, and is ready to expoſe his Life, by giving his Teſtimony to thoſe Truths, which before were *fooliſhneſs unto him*: And therefore the Goſpel is call'd, *the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believes.*

Rom. 1. 16.

lieves. This is that *Power of Godlineſs* which thoſe Hypocrites mentioned by St. *Paul* in the Text are without, here 'tis they are defective; which brings me to ſhew,

2. That the *Form of Godlineſs* may be without *the Power of it:* And this is confirm'd by many other Texts of Scripture. We are forewarn'd that we do *not look to the outward appearance*, for *the Devil can tranſform himſelf into an Angel of Light*; and then 'tis no wonder, that his Servants can put on the guiſe and appearance of the Children of God. There are numerous inſtances ſet down in the Holy Scripture, ſufficient to convince us of this Truth. We are told that a Man may pretend to be ſent from Heaven, and yet Preach another Goſpel, than that which our Saviour reveal'd to the World, and hereby deſerve an *Anathema*: Nay, he may Preach the true Goſpel with ſuch force of Reaſon, and wonderful Efficacy, ſo as *to ſave others, and yet he himſelf numbred amongſt the caſt aways.* I ſhall add no more Inſtances, becauſe this Propoſition is plainly affirm'd in the Text, not only that there are ſome that have the *Form*, but not the the *Power of Godlineſs:* But that many ſhall deny the *Power of Godlineſs*; ἠρνημένοι τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῆς (*i. e.*) they do not only

2 Cor. 11. 14.

1 Cor. 9. 27.

only fail in obſerving it, through frailty and infirmity: But they wilfully and preſumptuouſly, in deſpight of God's word, and their own Conſciences, Act quite contrary, and go directly againſt it; like *Herod* they are convinc'd of the Evil of their ways, and perhaps in part reform their Lives, and do many good Deeds; but ſtill they are reſolv'd *to keep their Herodias*, their beloved Sin, and darling Vice; and this they will by no means forego, even for Heaven it ſelf: They ſay with *Naaman the Syrian*; *in this one thing pardon thy Servant.* And if there are ſo many, who have a *Form*, but not *the Power of Godlineſs*, then certainly, it ought to be our great Care in the

2 Kin. 5. 18.

3. Place, To make a diligent Search, and ſeriouſly to conſider with our ſelves, whether we have the *Power of Godlineſs* or no. And this may be diſcover'd by the following Marks and Characters, ſet down by St. *Paul* in this Chapter immediately before the Text, Verſe 2, 3, 4. *They are* (ſays he) *lovers of themſelves, covetous, proud, boaſters, blaſphemers, diſobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural Affection; Truce-breakers, falſe accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe who are good; Traytors, heady, high-minded; lovers of Pleaſure more than lovers of God.*

On

On the other hand, if we would know who they are, that have not only the *Form of Godlineſs*, but alſo the *Power and Spirit of it*, we are told, *That the fruits of the Spirit are Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance.* But becauſe a wicked and bad Man may counterfeit theſe Graces ſo exactly, as to deceive not only other Men, but himſelf alſo; I ſhall therefore lay down four Rules by which any Man, who will but honeſtly and conſcientiouſly examine his own Heart, may certainly know, whether he has the *Power of Godlineſs*, or the *Form* only. And they are theſe, Gal. 5. 22, 23.

1. Such who have the *Power of Godlineſs*, will Act out of religious Motives, and Principles: (*i. e.*) They will be Religious, becauſe God has made Religion their Duty, and has annex'd the Rewards of eternal Happineſs, to the due Obedience of his Laws: Their Religion is not taken up from the Mode and Cuſtom of the place in which they live; and only for this Reaſon, becauſe they think it will ſuit beſt with their Intereſt; nor do they make it an Engine to carry on their worldly Projects and Deſigns; but they *ſearch the Scriptures* to find out what is the Will of God, and then they readily

comport their Obedience to his Commands, they look upon ſerving God as the great Buſineſs of their Lives, and make all other things truckle and ſubſervient to it: Their firſt and principal Care, Matth. 6. 33. *is to make ſure of the Kingdom of Heaven and its Righteouſneſs*, and then they are not very ſollicitous for *thoſe other things which will be added thereunto*: They prefer a good Conſcience before all other Comforts this world can afford them, and had rather *part with Father, Mother,* Mark 10. 29. *Wife and Children, nay their own Lives, than deny their great Lord and Maſter.*

2. Such as have the *Power of Godlineſs*, are religious in Private, as well as in Publick. They who have the true Fear of God, and retain awfull Apprehenſions of his Majeſty, conſider that his All-ſeeing Eye is every where, and beholds the *very intents and purpoſes of the heart.* He therefore who is truly Religious, is as devout in his Cloſet, as he is in the Church; as conſcientious in performing his private Devotions, as in frequenting the publick Worſhip of God: He is as careful to avoid all unjuſt Actions (tho' he is aſſur'd they will never be diſcover'd) as he is to prevent open Violence: He will not deſame, back-bite, or ſo much as ſpeak an evil word againſt his Neighbour (tho' he is

is Morally aſſur'd it will never come to his ears:) Nay, he will not harbour the leaſt wicked Thought againſt God, or injurious Intent againſt his Brother; becauſe he believes that God, who takes notice of all his Thoughts, Words, and Actions, will one day *call him to an Account for them, and either reward or puniſh him according to his Deeds.* Matth. 16. 27.

3. That Man who has the *Power of Godlineſs*, yields an uniform and univerſal Obedience to all God's Laws; he has the ſame Reaſon for obeying one Precept, which he has for obſerving the reſt; and therefore doth not think, that his performance of any one part of his Duty, will attone for the neglect of the other. He doth not take up with the more eaſie Duties of Religion, or avoid only ſuch Vices, as are burthenſome, and unacceptable to him, but he performs whatſoever God has Commanded him, how contrary ſoever to his temporal Intereſts, and corrupt Inclinations: *He forſakes every evil way, and lays aſide every weight*, and *has reſpect unto all God's Commandments.* He doth not endeavour to reconcile God with *Mammon*, or by being nice and exact in performing ſome of God's Commands, to make amends, for the breach of the reſt; but he gives himſelf up to obey God, with- Heb. 12. 1. Luk. 1. 6.

out any manner of Exception or Reſerve, and endeavours to ſerve him *with all his Soul, with all his Heart, and with all his Strength.* 'Tis true, a good Man may be guilty of ſome Sins: The weakneſs of our Nature is ſuch, That *the moſt juſt Man falls ſeven times a day:* But tho' he falls, yet he quickly riſes again, by a ſincere and hearty Repentance: He ſets a Watch over himſelf and reſolves to be more careful for the future: He doth not willfully and obſtinately go on in his Sins; but he is ſorry for them, he Prays and ſtrives againſt them, and by degrees he gets the Victory over them.

Prov. 24. 16.

4. He who has the *Power of Godlineſs* is Religious through the whole Courſe of his Life, he doth not only repent of his Sins, and obey the Law of God at ſome certain Times and Seaſons, but his whole Life is regular and uniform, and he maintains the ſame ſteady Courſe of Piety and Devotion. Many there are who are very Religious and Devout at ſome times, but then they let the Reins looſe at others, and think by a ſtrict Obſervation of ſome Duties to make amends for thoſe groſs Miſcarriages, they allow themſelves in all the reſt of their Lives; But the truly Religious Man perſeveres to the end, in Practiſe of Piety and Holineſs: He is not indeed always

always equally zealous and fervent, he doth not always worſhip God with the ſame Ardency of Affections, nor is he always wrought up to the ſame pitch of Devotion: But when he is at the loweſt Ebb; he endeavours to quicken and raiſe his Affections, he begs of God to enflame his Heart with a *Coal from the Altar*, and cannot reſt ſatisfied till *the Light of God's Countenance* ſhines in upon his Soul, and he is in ſome meaſure aſſur'd of God's Favour and Good-will towards him.

Theſe are the four Marks by which we may certainly diſcover (if we will but bring our ſelves to the Tryal) whether we have the *Power of Godlineſs*, or the *Form* only. I come now

Fourthly, To ſhew, How far we muſt *turn away* from ſuch Perſons, as have only the *Form*, but not *the Power of Godlineſs*. And,

I. We muſt Examine their Doctrine.
II. Deteſt their evil Examples.
III. Avoid their Company.

I. We muſt Examine their Doctrine and the Ends of it; St. *Paul* gives us a hint of both; *Now I beſeech you, Brethren, mark them, which cauſe Diviſions and Offences* (there's their Doctrine) *contrary to what they have* Rom. 16. 17, 18.

have heard, and avoid them: for they that are ſuch, ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt (here are their Ends and Deſigns) *but their own Bellies; and by good Words and fair Speeches, deceive the hearts of the Simple.* Whatever Doctrines have a ſhew of ſeeming Holineſs and Piety, and yet by probable Conſequence tend to promote any evil and wicked Deſigns, ought not to be receiv'd, till try'd by the Touch-ſtone of God's word, and are found exactly conformable to the Holy Scripture.

II. We muſt deteſt their evil Examples; for this is an abſolute and certain Rule; that unleſs we diſlike their evil Practices, and alienate our Affections from them; we ſhall write after the ſame Copy: Our Life will be according to our liking, and therefore we muſt hate and deteſt their Hypocriſie, though we love the Men; we muſt abhor the Uglyneſs of their Vice, tho' we bear no ill will to their Perſons. In this Senſe we muſt *hate them right ſore, and with a perfect hatred, even as though they were our Enemies.* Pſal. 139. 22.

III. We muſt avoid their Company, and this is the literal meaning of the Text. *From ſuch turn away.* It was a ſubtil, though a wicked Policy of *Jeroboam*, to ſet up two golden Calves, the one at *Dan*, the other at *Beth-el*, that he might detain his People

People at home; leaſt going up to *Jeruſalem*, and converſing with the Subjects of *Rehoboam*, they ſhould contract a Friendſhip and Familiarity with them, and be perſwaded to return to their Obedience. He knew how much Company, and Converſation wins upon Mens Affections; and that Society and Familiarity has by degrees wrought out, what the moſt perſwaſive Rhetorick, could never accompliſh. *Be ye not therefore unequally yoked* (ſays the Apoſtle) *for what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs*, &c. *Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye ſeparate (ſaith the Lord) and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* But this is the Rock upon which too many ſplit; they firſt look upon all other Men, as common and unclean (who in Truth are much better than themſelves) and then not only avoid their Converſation, but conclude that they are not to be treated by the Rules of common Honeſty: And thus by ſtraining the String too high, make it Jar, and ſpoil all the Harmony and Conſort. 2 Cor. 6. 14, 16.

And therefore I ſhall more particularly ſet out the Bounds, and Limitations of this Precept, and conſider how far we muſt *turn away* from ſuch Men; as have the

Form,

Form, but not the *Power of Godlineſs*. And firſt, We are not hereby engag'd to quit our particular Engagements; or to ſeparate our ſelves from our Friends, and near Relations: For the Servant is ty'd to his Maſter, the Child to his Parent, the Husband and Wife to each other; and no Pretence of greater Sanctity and Purity is ſufficient to excuſe them from the performance of their Duty. Nay, we muſt not ſo *turn away* from any Man, as to refuſe doing good and charitable Offices, either to his Soul or Body: But rather imitate the Example of our Heavenly Father, *Who makes his ſun to ſhine, and his rain to deſcend on the juſt and the unjuſt*. The more wicked any Man is, and the more infected with the Leproſie of Sin, the more need he has of a Phyſician. If therefore we ſee a Man, who has the *Form*, but not the *Power of Godlineſs*; let us omit no opportunity of reclaiming him, from the Evil of his ways, let us aſſiſt him with ſeaſonable Counſel and Advice, and do him all the good Turns that lie in our way, remembring that excellent Saying of a Heathen *Homo ſum, humani nihil à me alienum puto*; I my ſelf am but a Man, and therefore no Affliction can happen to any one, but I bear my part in it: But let us not contract a Fami-

Matth. 5. 45.

a Familiarity with a vicious or heretical Perſon, let us not lay ſuch an one in our Boſoms, or make him our particular Friend, but keep ſuch a ſtrict Guard over our ſelves, and be ſo cautious in our Dealings with him, that we may receive no Prejudice by his evil Example. We muſt treat him as we uſually do thoſe, who are ſick of an infectious Diſeaſe; furniſh him with thoſe things he wants, Adminiſter to all his preſſing Neceſſities: But we are not oblig'd to converſe frequently with him, or to expoſe our ſelves to the Danger, of catching that Diſtemper under which he labours, ſuch a Familiarity as this 'tis our Duty to avoid. *Bleſſed is the man* (ſays *David*) *that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful.* Pſal. 1. 1. And in another place. *I have not dwelt with vain perſons: neither will I have fellowſhip with the deceitful. I have hated the Congregation of the wicked: and will not ſit among the ungodly. I will waſh my hands in innocency O Lord, and ſo will I compaſs thine Altar.* Pſal. 43. 4. And when ever the Duties of our Callings oblige us to frequent their Company; we muſt ſay (with the Pſalmiſt) *Wo is me that I dwell in Meſech, and take up my Habitation in the tents of Kedar.* Pſal. 120. 5.

In

In ſhort let us obſerve theſe three Rules,

1. Let us imitate them in good things. The *Form of Godlineſs*, the outward Profeſſion of Religion, is highly neceſſary and Praiſe-worthy. Let us therefore imitate them in this. Nay, Let us go beyond them in a conſtant attendance on the publick Duties of Religion, in the Devotion of our Prayers, the Solemnity of our Faſts, the becoming Decency of our Worſhip; and in avoiding all ſuch Sins, as are not only heinous Offences againſt God, but ſcandalous amongſt Men, and uneaſie to modeſt and vertuous Converſation. Let that Face and outſide of Religion which they put on, incite in us a Holy Emulation, to outdo them in their own Art: For good is ſtill the ſame in whatſoever Subject 'tis found; we have no Reaſon to refrain from good Works, becauſe a *Papiſt* hopes to merit by them: I'll learn from a *Turk* to die for my Religion, and to ſearch the Scriptures from a *Jew*. Our Saviour makes the unjuſt Steward's Wiſdom a Pattern for his Diſciples. The Ox and the Aſs are made uſe of to teach Men Gratitude, and the Piſmire Wiſdom. Nay, we may learn Diligence, and Care of our eternal Salvation from the Devil himſelf, *Who compaſſeth the whole Earth,*

Earth, and walketh about like a roaring Lyon, ſeeking whom he may devour. 1 Pet. 5. 8.

2. Let us bear with them in things indifferent, *following after thoſe things which make for Peace*, and where we lawfully and with a good Conſcience may, *becoming all things to all men, that we may ſave ſome.* In ſhort, we muſt *love both Truth and Peace*, (*i. e.*) both of them in Conjunction one with the other. We muſt ſo love Peace, as not to loſe Truth, in matters ſubſtantial: And ſo love Truth, as not to break Peace in matters indifferent. Zech. 8. 19.

Laſtly, Let us turn away and avoid, only that which is evil in them; this is of the ſame Import with that *Caveat* which our Saviour gave to his Diſciples, againſt the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. *To beware of their Leven* (*i. e.*) all that is ſour and infectious, which will ſpread the Contagion, and propagate the miſchief. *Let us diſtinguiſh the good from the bad, the light from the darkneſs; Let the one be call'd day, and the other night*; Let the one be imitated, and the other avoided. Let only *the unfruitful works of darkneſs be rejected*: But let us welcome the Light, and embrace Love, and imitate the good, where-ever we meet with them: And if we do ſo, then *Mercy and Truth ſhall meet together, Righteouſneſs and Peace* Eph. 5. 11.

Peace ſhall kiſs each other. Truth ſhall flouriſh out of the Earth, and Righteouſneſs ſhall look down from Heaven: Yea, the Lord ſhall ſhew Loving-kindneſs, for his Salvation is nigh unto them that fear him, that Glory may be in our Land. Amen.

SER-

SERMON IV.

PROV. XIX. 25.

Smite a Scorner, and the Simple will beware; and reprove one that hath Underſtanding, and he will underſtand knowledge.

THE *Proverbs* of *Solomon* are a Collection of wiſe Sentences and Apophthegms, grounded upon the long Obſervation, and ripe Experience of one of the moſt Potent Princes, and wiſeſt of Men: And ſince Proverbs in general are obſerv'd to contain the Wiſdom of all Nations, therefore we may reaſonably expect to find a rich Treaſure of Divine Truths, in thoſe of which *Solomon* was the Author, or elſe by Collection made his own. All the Books of the Old Teſtament may well be compar'd to a fruitful Soil, but

this of the Proverbs abounds with a more rich Vein, and is of the greater Uſe, becauſe it contains Precepts accommodated to all the Neceſſities of humane Life; for the moſt part they have no coherence, but are ſet down juſt as they came to the Mind of the inſpired Author. The Verſe which I have read to you, is of the neareſt Importance, and ſhews us the prudent uſe which a wiſe Man makes of a friendly Reproof; and what great advantages he reaps by it. *Reprove one that hath underſtanding, and he will underſtand knowledge* (i.e.) 'tis a Sign of a Wiſe, a Good, and an underſtanding Man to take Reproof patiently and thankfully, to give an attentive Ear to it, to be very quick-ſighted in diſcovering his own Faults, when they are laid open to him, and very diligent and induſtrious in reforming himſelf. *Reprove one that hath underſtanding, and he will underſtand Knowledge.* From which words I ſhall ſhew,

Pſal. 55. 32.

I. The Excellent uſe which a wiſe Man makes of a friendly Reproof.

II. The great Difficulty of performing this friendly Office.

III. I ſhall lay down ſome Motives to engages us to ſet about it: And,

IV. Give

IV. Give ſome Rules and Directions, for a right Management of our ſelves, in the Execution of it.

And firſt of the excellent Uſe which a wiſe Man makes of a friendly Reproof. *As an Ear-ring of Gold, and an Ornament of fine Gold, ſo is a wiſe Reprover upon an obedient Ear*, which is thus Paraphras'd by a Right Reverend Father of our Church. "A good "Man will not think himſelf reproach'd, "but rather oblig'd by a prudent Reproof, "which meeting with an attentive, con- "ſidering, and patient Mind, makes a Man "take it ſo kindly; that he eſteems him "who beſtows it, as much as if he had hung "a Jewel of Gold, or put the richeſt Or- "nament about his Neck. There is no- thing harder to find than a true Friend; and he is the trueſt and beſt Friend, who will moſt impartially Reprove us for our Faults, ſhew us the Errors of our Lives, diſcover to us thoſe Rocks on which we ſplit, and faithfully tell us when we do amiſs; and therefore this is one way of making a Friend of an inveterate Enemy, by taking notice what fault or weakneſs he upbraids us moſt with, and accuſes us of; and thus by coming to the knowledge of our Errors, we take the firſt ſtep to- wards the Amendment and Reformation Prov. 25. 12.

of them: And if Reproof is ſo uſeful from an Enemy, how much more beneficial may it be made from a Friend? Who will both inform us when we go aſtray, and ſet us in the right Path; who will conceal our Faults from other Men, and yet impartially expoſe them to our own View; who knows firſt how to Lance and lay open the Sore, and then to apply a fit Remedy to it. Certainly he who has got ſuch a Friend, is poſſeſs'd of an ineſtimable Treaſure, and there is requir'd only an underſtanding Mind, and a ſanctify'd Heart, to make him capable to receive Benefit by his Advice. But alas! For the moſt part Self-conceit is ſo prevalent in us, that we doat even upon our Blemiſhes and Imperfections, becauſe our own; we fall in Love with our own Pictures, tho' never ſo deform'd and ugly, and there is no readier and ſurer way to diſoblige us, than by performing the moſt friendly Office in the World, the giving us a faithful Glaſs to behold our ſelves in, and ſetting our Actions in a true Light: This ſeems to be ſuch an Act of Superiority, as few Men can admit of; for tho' we muſt give the Pre-heminence to others in Riches, and Power, and the Gifts of Fortune; yet few Men are willing to believe, any one is more Wiſe, Prudent, and Diſcreet, than themſelves. And therefore, II. It

II. It must needs be a very difficult Task to perform this kind and friendly Office, and that in Respect either,

1. Of the Reprover, or 2. Of the Person who is to be reproved. And first I shall consider the Difficulty of it with Respect to the Reprover. For,

1. A Wise and good Man (and such Persons are only fit to Reprove others) is for the most part too modest to reprove other Men. Either he has too low and mean Opinion of himself and his performances, or else he is desirous to keep at home, and finds that a right Management of his own Actions, is a full Employ sufficient to take up all his time and thoughts; he is not willing to intermeddle with other Mens Concerns, or to intrude himself into Business which doth not belong to him: Or he is sensible, that he himself is guilty of many Miscarriages; and the Reflection on his own Infirmities, with-holds him from Reproving the Failures of other Men, who (as he is apt to think) are better than himself. 2. A good Man is apt to Err on the Charitable side, he is with Difficulty perswaded to believe ill of his Neighbour, tho' the Crime which is charg'd upon him, is apparently and notoriously true. Charity will find out many Excuses, turn the best side of things,

and make the moſt candid Repreſentation of his Neighbour's Actions they will bear, and in this Sence at leaſt, *Covers a multitude of ſins.* 3. A good Man is apt to be too timorous: A mild and humble temper of Mind makes him fearful of diſobliging thoſe with whom he maintains a fair Correſpondence, and to whom probably he may have been beholding for many good Offices, and for theſe and ſuch like Reaſons he may be very averſe, and backward to the performance of this Duty; tho' it muſt be confeſs'd, he is much to blame for being ſo: For Difficulty is ſo far from being a juſt Excuſe for the non-performance of our Duty, that it is the beſt Argument can be made uſe of, to perſwade us to ſet about it more manfully and courageouſly. *Thou knewest that I was an auſtere man* (ſaid the Lord to his idle and unprofitable Servant) *taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not ſow: Wherefore then gaveſt thou not my Money into the Bank;* (*i. e.*) Since nothing but a diligent and vigorous Endeavour to ſerve God, will enable us to perform our Duty; therefore we ought to employ all our Strength and Induſtry, turn every ſtone, uſe all juſt and likely means, which will yield us any help and aſſiſtance: And ſo much the rather, becauſe the Difficulty of

1 Eph. 4. 8.

Luk. 19. 22.

of performing this Duty will appear ſtill greater, by conſidering,

2. The Perſon who is to be Reprov'd. For we muſt not alway expect to meet with a kind and favourable Acceptance of what we Deſign for the good of our Neighbour. Many Men are like thoſe Swine mentioned in the Goſpel, if we throw the Pearls of good Advice before them, they will be ſo far from thinking themſelves beholding to us, for this our kind and charitable Office, That *they will turn again and rent us.* We muſt expect to loſe their good Opinion and Friendſhip, and that they will *become our Enemies, becauſe we tell them the Truth.* For, Matth. 7. 6.

1. We ſhall find that ſome Men think themſelves too great to be Reprov'd. They are indeed conſcious of their own Failings, they know that they are guilty of many ſcandalous Crimes, and groſs Immoralities; but yet they Fanſie that they may live, without any manner of Reſtraint, becauſe they are above the common Rank and Level of Mankind: They have Plenty of all the good things of this World, ſufficient to maintain them in Pomp and Grandeur, without a ſervile Dependance on any one; and therefore they look upon it as an Intrenchment on their Privilege, to be call'd to an Account for

their Words or Actions, or to be Reprov'd for their evil Deeds, tho' with never ſo much Prudence and Diſcretion, Mildneſs and Submiſſion. What is more frequent, than for Men of plentiful Fortunes, to laviſh out thoſe good Gifts of God's Providence) of which they are only the Stewards and Truſtees) in Rioting and Drunkenneſs, Chambring and Wantonneſs, on this falſe Suppoſition, That they may do what they pleaſe, with what they (thro' miſtake) call their own? How many are there that fill all places, where they come with Oaths and Execrations, and the blaſphemous Abuſe of God's moſt holy Name, and yet would look upon it as a great piece of Rudeneſs, Ill-breeding, and an intolerable Affront, ſhould any one reprove them for ſo doing?

2. Others there are, and thoſe of all Ranks and Degrees, who think themſelves too good to be Reprov'd. There are too many who are ſo puff'd up with a Phariſaical Opinion of their own Righteouſneſs, that they make their own Words and Actions, the Standard whereby they try all Religion and Vertue; they firſt lay it down for a Rule, that that Church or Party of which they are Members, is the only true one upon Earth, they Fanſie themſelves the only Elect of God, and Favourites

rites of Heaven, and then make this falſe and dangerous Inference, That they can neither think, nor Act amiſs; for ſince they are the Elect, and precious in whom God ſees no ſin, therefore 'tis high Injuſtice for any one elſe to take any notice of their Miſcarriages. To how little Purpoſe would it be to reprove a Man, that is ſo full of his own Righteouſneſs, that he thinks he has attain'd unto Perfection, and is ſo puffſt up with the Contemplation of his own Performances, that he aſpires to Works of Supererogation; for to be ſo humble, as to diſclaim any Pretence to merit, and to be truly ſenſible of our own Wants, is a Qualification abſolutely neceſſary to render a Man capable of receiving benefit by good Advice.

And Laſtly, moſt Men are too Wiſe to be reproved. Self-conceit is ſo natural and graceful a Vice, that all Men are more or leſs given to it, we are all apt to *lean too much to our own Underſtandings*; and to eſteem thoſe Opinions falſe, and thoſe Practices ridiculous, which do not exactly fall in with our Pre-conceptions, till by uſe they are render'd Cuſtomary and Familiar to us; we have a kindneſs for every thing, which carries our own Badge upon it, or has any Relation to us, and are fond of the Off-ſpring, either of our Minds or Bodies, tho' never ſo much deform'd. With what Prov. 3. 5.

Extenua-

Extenuating Circumſtances do we cloath our darling Vices, ſo that they may appear, if not like Vertues, yet more venial and excuſable? Reprove the Covetous Man for his Avarice, and he will tell you, you are miſtaken, that he is only laying up againſt a rainy Day, and wiſely provident againſt future Contingences; and what you call Sordidneſs is only Foreſight and Frugality. Admoniſh the Prodigal and tell him, that he will ſoon ſquander away, what his more frugal Anceſtors took ſo much Care to rake together, and he will ſmile upon you, and make you this Anſwer, that he hates to be ſneaking and niggardly; and what you term Profuſeneſs and Luxury, he miſ-calls Liberality. You will find it a difficult Matter to perſwade the Superſtitious, that Religion doth not conſiſt in ſplendid ſhews or ritual Performances: Or the blind Zealot, that whilſt he deſtroys his Brother, he doth not do God good Service: Or the giddy Enthuſiaſt, that *his tongue is not touch'd with a Coal from the Altar.* Mankind are generally wedded to their own Opinions, and Practices, and are more influenc'd by Education and Cuſtom, than Reaſon; ſo that tho' they are convinc'd they are in the wrong, yet it goes againſt the Grain to confeſs, and acknowledge their Error. For Wiſ-

dom

dom and Knowledge is the diſtinguiſhing Character of Mankind, that which renders one Man more excellent than another, and by conſequence gives the Superiority; for whoever is miſtaken muſt acknowledge, his defect in Wiſdom or Prudence, at leaſt as to that Particular, and that he was in ſome meaſure a Fool, which is the greateſt Reproach and Imputation can be caſt upon a Man. For tho' 'tis the neceſſary conſequence of the Fall of our firſt Parents, and the Weakneſs and Corruption of our Natures, that amidſt the hurry of worldly Buſineſs, and the many Emergencies of humane Life, the beſt and wiſeſt Man in the World is frequently guilty of Follies and Over-ſights; yet we ſhall find few Men willing to acknowledge it, and 'tis Grace alone which by rendring us truly humble, can make us ſenſible of our miſerable and indigent Condition, and *how poor, and blind, and naked we are.* Theſe are the Difficulties which muſt be encountr'd withal, by that Man who undertakes to Reprove his Neighbour, which would be ſufficient to diſcourage any wiſe Man from venturing upon this Province, were he influenc'd only by prudential Principles, and temporal Inducements; but ſince God, has made it the Duty of every good Man, we may be aſſur'd, Rev. 3. 17.

III. That

III. That he has given us ſufficient Motives to go thro' with it, and Encouragements to perform it; which are ſuch as theſe. Conſider,

1. That much Glory will accrue to God by a faithful Diſcharge of this Duty.
2. Much Good-will redound to our Neighbour.
3. We our ſelves ſhall reap much Benefit thereby.
4. We ſhall avoid thoſe Miſchiefs which the neglect of this Duty will certainly bring upon us.

1. By a faithful Diſcharge of this Duty we ſhall bring much Glory to God; by encouraging Vertue and Goodneſs, and preventing a multitude of Sins; for the beſt way to keep out that Deluge of Atheiſm and Profaneneſs, Looſeneſs and Debauchery, which of late years is broke in upon us, and is like to be our Ruine, is vigorouſly and courageouſly to oppoſe our ſelves againſt the Stream, and by ſhewing our open Deteſtation and Abhorrence of it, if poſſible, to ſtem the Tide of prevailing Vice. At ſuch a time as this, when the Calamity is grown Publick, there is no ſtanding Neuter, he that is not active and zealous in this Matter, and doth

doth not uſe his utmoſt Endeavours to diſcourage Vice and Profaneneſs, is to be deem'd a Rebel and Traytor againſt Vertue and Religion. For when Men who profeſs, that they believe the Goſpel of our Saviour Chriſt, and expect Salvation thro' his Merits, ſhall ſit ſtill and hear the Holy Scripture made the Subject of the Jeſts and Drollery of prophane Men, his Goſpel ridicul'd, his holy Name diſhonoured, and not be mov'd, and tranſported againſt ſuch blaſphemous Diſcourſe, when they ſhall ſhew no open Abhorrence and Deteſtation at unjuſt, unrighteous, or wicked Actions; they give theſe impious Wretches too much Reaſon to believe, that tho' they make Profeſſion of Religion with their Mouths, yet they are ſuch Fools, as *to ſay in their hearts There is no God*, and that they have as little true Senſe and Reverence for a ſupream Being, as themſelves. For what generous Man can be contented to ſit ſtill, and hear his beſt Friend reproach'd, and ſpoken ill off? What dutiful Son can endure, that any Aſperſions ſhould be caſt upon his Father, that his Words and Actions ſhould be ridicul'd, without taking notice of, and reſenting the Affront? much more Reaſon have we to be zealous, when we hear prophane Wretches *ſet their mouths againſt Hea-*

Pſal. 10. 1.

Heaven, and blaſpheme the God that made them, and with one Breath of his Diſpleaſure, can reduce them into nothing, or into a Condition worſe than nothing. If good Men would reſent this Diſhonour done to God, and Reprove thoſe who are guilty of it, Men might be privately wicked, but they durſt not be ſo publickly Prophane; there might be many ill Men, but there would be very few ill Examples; Vice would be out of Countenance, and be depriv'd of its keeneſt Weapon, and moſt prevailing Argument, Faſhionableneſs and Imitation; and if thoſe *who turn many to Righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine as the Stars of the Firmament*, certainly thoſe who hinder and prevent others from being wicked, ſhall not miſs of a due Reward.

Dan. 12. 3.

2. Our Neighbour would receive much Benefit by a friendly Admonition. For tho' at firſt Reproof will be unwelcome and troubleſome, and he may be rather enrag'd than amended by it; yet by degrees a gentle Reproof will make its way, and Gain upon him, and if ever he comes to be reform'd, he will reap the Benefit of it, Peace of Conſcience, and Quiet of Mind in this Life, and everlaſting Happineſs in the Life to come. And who can be juſtly ſenſible, what ineſtimable benefits he confers upon his Neighbour, and what apparent

parent Danger, he delivers him from, by being inſtrumental in his Reformation, and yet think any Pains too great to bring about this excellent Work? For ſhall wicked Men take more Pains to pervert and ruin the Souls of Men, then good Men ſhall *to ſave them alive*? Shall the Drunkard and Laſcivious Perſon be more diligent to draw others into the *ſame exceſs of Riot*, than the Chaſte and Temperate, are to reclaim them from thoſe Vices? This would be to Diſhonour our Chriſtian Profeſſion, and publickly to own, that the Devil has more faithful Servants than our great Lord and Maſter. Let us therefore follow the Example of the bleſſed Jeſus, who made it his chief Buſineſs to reprove the World *of ſin, of Righteouſneſs, and Judgment*; he came upon this Errand, liv'd a Laborious Life, and dy'd a painful and ignominious Death, for this very End, that he might turn Sinners from the evil of their ways, and promote Vertue and Piety in the World. To Reprove our Neighbour is therefore the higheſt Inſtance of Charity, ſince hereby we deſign him the greateſt good Imaginable, the Happineſs both of Body and Soul. And this we ſhould be the rather prevail'd upon to attempt; ſince, John 16. 8.

3. By Reproving others we may reap much Benefit and Advantage by it our ſelves. *Firſt*,

First, hereby we ſhall provide our ſelves a Friend to do the ſame kind Office for us. For moſt Men are apt to recriminate, and when they are touch'd to the quick themſelves, they think to extenuate their Crimes, by finding fault with thoſe who Reprov'd them, and ſince we are all weak and infirm Creatures, and ſubject to the like Paſſions with other Men, a moſt excellent uſe may be made of ſuch Recriminations: We may hence diſcover our moſt ſecret Faults, and form an effectual Motive to amend them. For, 2. It will make us aſham'd to be guilty of thoſe Sins, which we Reprove in another; and the Conſideration that his Eye is upon us, will make us more wary in our Carriage towards him, and more exact in the Government of our Lives and Converſations.

Rom. 2. 21. *Thou that teacheſt another* (ſays the Apoſtle) *teacheſt thou not thy ſelf; thou that preacheſt a Man ſhould not ſteal, doſt thou ſteal; thou that ſayeſt a Man ſhould not commit Adultery, doſt thou commit Adultery, thou that abhorreſt Idols, doſt thou commit Sacrilege?* 3. We ſhall Entitle our ſelves to a bleſſed Reward, *He that ſaith to the Wicked Thou art Righteous, ſhall the people*

Prov. 24. 24, 25. *Curſe, Nations ſhall abhor him: but to them that rebuke him ſhall be delight, and a good Bleſſing ſhall come upon him.*

Laſtly,

Laſtly, We ſhall hereby avoid thoſe Miſchiefs which the neglect of this Duty will certainly bring upon us. For if we do not admoniſh our Neighbour, when we ſee him commit any grievous and preſumptuous Sin, we our ſelves are Partakers in his Guilt, and ſhall be accountable for it before God. *Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them.* And not to Reprove them will be accounted, *to have fellowſhip with them.* Theſe are ſuch weighty Conſiderations, and powerful Motives, as one would think ſhould encourage every one to the Practice of this Duty, tho' never ſo Difficult. But ſince it requires not only Courage and Ability, but alſo a great meaſure of Prudence and Circumſpection to perform it aright, I ſhall in the Eph. 5. 11.

IV. and Laſt place, lay down ſome Directions for a due and prudential Execution of it.

1. Propoſe to your ſelf a good End in Reproving others.

2. Have certain Knowledge of the Offence.

3. Endeavour to avoid that Fault your ſelf, you reprove in others.

4. Uſe the moſt inoffenſive Words, and do it after the mildeſt manner imaginable.

5. Obſerve ſuch due Circumſtances of Time and Place; as your Chriſtian Prudence ſhall direct.

1. Be ſure to propoſe to your ſelf a good End in reproving others. Which muſt be the Benefit and Amendment of the Perſon to be reproved. For if it appears, that the Reaſon why you reprove him, is to vent your own Paſſion, or to give way to the Reſentments of your own Mind, the Perſon reprov'd, will reap very little Benefit by it; he will look upon it as a perſonal Quarrel, proceeding from the Ill-will of his Adverſary, and rather ſeek a way how he may retaliate the Injury (as he calls it) than look into his own Breaſt, and amend his Fault. 'Tis the firſt ſtep to a Cure, to have a good Opinion of our Phyſician, which will incline us to follow his Advice, and make a due Application of his Preſcriptions: For 'tis not the Excellency of a Medicine, without a proper and timely Application of it, can make it effectual. If therefore we deſire our Reproof ſhould take place, we muſt be ſure ſo to manage it, that the Perſon admoniſhed, may look upon it as an Effect of our Love and Good-will, our ſincere Deſire

Deſire to promote his Intereſt, rather than of any Advantage, we may propoſe to our ſelves by it, or the gratifying a peeviſh and querulous Humour.

2. Let us be ſure to have certain Knowledge of the Offence, before we take upon us to Reprove any one. An uncertain Rumor or common Fame (which is to frequently a common Lyar) is not a ſufficient ground of Reproof, much leſs a groundleſs Surmiſe, or wide Conjecture: But we muſt be morally certain of the Offence, and either Witneſſes of it our ſelves, or elſe we muſt have ſuch plain Evidence for it, (tho' not ocular Demonſtration) as no reaſonable Man can call in Queſtion, before we believe an ill Report of our Neighbour. To yield a ready and willing Ear to Defamation and Tale-bearing, ſhews that either we are very Ill-natur'd our ſelves, or elſe very Credulous; that we want the moſt excellent of all Chriſtian Vertues, which is the very Life and Soul of Chriſtianity, I mean Love and Charity to our Neighbour, which as the Apoſtle tells us, *Is not eaſily provok'd, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*; (*i. e.*) believeth and hopeth the beſt of every thing, and every Man. And this is a Grace ſo Eſſential to Chriſtianity, that 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5, &c.

whoſoever is deſtitute of it, may make what Pretences he pleaſes to Purity, Holineſs, and Perfection, but he is in the loweſt Form of Chriſt's School, and ignorant of the firſt Rudiments of true Religion.

3. Be ſure you your ſelf are not guilty of that Fault, which you Reprove in others. *Let the Righteous ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſs, and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent Oil, which ſhall not break my head.* For though 'tis the Wiſdom and Duty of every good Chriſtian, to *ſuffer the Word of Exhortation* and Reproof, tho' from the worſt Man, and his moſt inveterate Enemy: Yet for the moſt part it ſo falls out, that the Reproof of thoſe Men, who are notoriouſly guilty of the ſame Crime, makes very little Impreſſion upon us; we can hardly believe them in earneſt, who blame us for the doing thoſe things which they recommend by their own Examples; and we are very apt to conclude, that the Reaſon why they cry down the Vice, is that they may engroſs the Practice of it to themſelves. But when a Man of known Vertue and Probity, takes upon him to Reprove, his Admonitions carry weight and Authority along with them; the Reverence which is paid to his Perſon, ſets an edge upon his Reproofs, and

Pſal. 141. 5.

and he doth not ſo much requeſt, as command a Reformation.

4. In Reproving we muſt uſe the moſt inoffenſive words, and do it after the mildeſt manner imaginable. *Brethren*, (ſays the Apoſtle) *if any Man be overtaken in a fault, you that are ſpiritual reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of Meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf leaſt thou alſo be tempted.* If his Offence proceed either from weakneſs, or inadvertency, from miſtake, or the frailty of humane Nature; the Oyl of Pity and Compaſſion, a mild and friendly Admonition will ſink deeper into his Mind, and ſooner heal the wound, than a more rough and churliſh Medicine. There is indeed a time when we muſt uſe the Cauſtick, and the Corroſive, when we meet with a daring and inſolent Offender: At ſuch a time as this to be cold or lukewarm is to give up the Cauſe of God, and to encourage Men in their wicked doings. We muſt ſhew our ſelves *Zealous, for the Law of our God*, and the Good and Welfare of our Brother: But then we muſt take Care *that this Zeal be according to knowledge*, That it be moderated and temper'd with true Chriſtian Prudence. Gal. 6. 1. Rom. 10. 2.

5. And Laſtly, we ought to obſerve ſuch due Circumſtances of time, and place, &c. as our Chriſtian Prudence ſhall direct, and

right Reaſon dictate to us. 'Tis the Obſervation of Men converſant in Buſineſs, that the Succeſs of our Undertakings depends much on our right timing of them, and in nothing more than in Adminiſtring Reproof. God came to *Adam in the cool of the day*, and the beſt time to adviſe a Man, is when he is Sedate and Calm, and at leiſure to conſider of the Counſel we give him. Every Man has his *mollia tempora fandi*; Seaſons when he is willing and diſpos'd to receive an Impreſſion, and the way to make our Advice ſucceſsful and profitable to him, is to lay hold on theſe Opportunities, for as *Solomon* well obſerves, *A word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it? it is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver.* Prov. 15. 23. There muſt be alſo regard had to the place, for the more private our Reproof is, it is for the moſt part the better. *If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, tell him his fault between thee and him alone.* Matth. 18 15. Publick Correption is then only neceſſary, when others are to be warn'd to leave the ſame Sin, and avoid the ſame Snare. Neither are all Perſons to be treated after the ſame manner: Inferiours muſt be very careful how they behave themſelves towards their Superiours and Governours; *Is it fit to ſay to a King, thou art wicked? and to Princes, ye are ungodly?* Job 34. 18. Great Care muſt

muſt be had, leaſt what we think Zeal for God, and the Good of our Neighbour, ſhould be juſtly interpreted Sawſineſs and and Preſumption. And therefore, when *Nathan* was ſent by God himſelf to Reprove *David*, he doth it after the moſt modeſt and ſubmiſſive manner; by repreſenting his Caſe to him in a Parable, and decently veiling his Reproof under the name of another Man. With our Equals and Inferiours, we may uſe greater Liberty and Freedom, only taking Care, that whilſt we reprove the Vice we do not ſhew any diſtaſte to the Perſon.

Many more Rules might be given, but in this, as in ſuch like Caſes, much is to be left to Chriſtian Prudence; and he who carefully obſerves the firſt Rule I laid down (with which I ſhall alſo conclude) cannot do very much amiſs. Which is, *That we make the Glory of God, and the good of our Neighbour, the End and Aim of our Reproof, as well as of our other Actions.*

SERMON V.

PREACH'D

When the CHAPEL was newly Furniſh'd and Beautify'd.

PSALM XCVI. 9.

O Worſhip the Lord in the Beauty of Holineſs.

'TIS agreed on by the whole Current of Interpreters, that the inſpir'd Pen-man of this Pſalm, ſets forth the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, and the bleſſed Effects of it, the Converſion of the *Jews*, and the Salvation of all Nations; and hereby ſhews us not only how God was worſhip'd under the Law, but points out to us how he expects to be worſhip'd under the Goſpel. The beginning of this Pſalm contains an Exhortation to all the People of the World, as well Heathens as *Jews*, to praiſe God for that wonderful Bleſſing, of ſending a Saviour to preach the

the Goſpel unto them, and revealing the Doctrine of Remiſſion of Sins; and therefore he commands his Worſhippers, *To declare his Glory among the Heathen, and his wonders among all the People, that all the Earth ſhould ſing unto the Lord, and that they ſhould ſhew forth his Salvation from day to day*, ſo that their Praiſe might be as extenſive as his Benefits, and in ſome meaſure bear Proportion with his Bleſſings, which *were to be ſhed upon all the Nations of the world, and to continue for ever*, Ver. 1, 2, 3. In the following Verſes he inforces this Duty of praiſing God, by ſome Arguments drawn from the Conſideration of his glorious and wonderful Attributes; his Majeſty, Glory, Power, and Wiſdom; which were after an extraordinary manner diſplay'd and manifeſted in the Incarnation of our Bleſſed Saviour, and from thence he concludes, *Ver.* 7, 8, 9. That it was the Duty of all Men to frequent the place of *God's Publick Worſhip*, to Proſtrate themſelves before him, and to admire, reverence, and adore his Holy Name. *Honour and Majeſty are before him: Strength and Beauty are in his Sanctuary: Give unto the Lord Glory and Strength, give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his name, bring an Offering, and come into his Courts:* And having in theſe words

words deſcrib'd the Worſhip of God, after the manner of worſhipping him under the Law, by approaching his Temple, and bringing a Sacrifice; in the words of the Text he explains himſelf, that he doth not mean that theſe Sacrifices ſhould continue under the Goſpel, and that thoſe who liv'd under the Reign and Kingdom of the Meſſiah, ſhould worſhip as the *Jews* did, but that it would be their Duty to *worſhip God* in the *Beauty of Holineſs*, (*i. e.*) with ſuch a pure and devout Frame of Mind, ſuch ſuitable Affections, ſuch becoming, decent, and orderly Behaviour, as were typify'd and denoted to them by the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewiſh Law. *O Worſhip the Lord in the Beauty of Holineſs.*

In which words we have theſe two plain Leſſons taught us.

I. That all Chriſtians are oblig'd frequently to meet together for the *Publick Worſhip of God.*

II. That the *Publick Worſhip of God*, ought to be perform'd in the moſt decent and ſolemn manner imaginable.

1. That all Chriſtians are oblig'd frequently to meet together for the performance of God's *Publick Worſhip.* By Worſhip I mean, that immediate Worſhip, which

which is offer'd up to God in his Sanctuary, that *Publick Acknowledgment* of his Government, and Soveraignty over us, by the performance of thoſe Duties, which are enjoyn'd us in the firſt Table, ſuch as are praying to him, magnifying his Holy Name, hearing his Word, and receiving his Sacraments; which Duties are in a peculiar manner call'd the Worſhip of God, becauſe they have God for their immediate Object, they are addreſs'd to him, and terminate in him: The Will of God is the Reaſon why they are perform'd, and his Honour and Glory ought to be the ultimate End of the performance of them. So that the Worſhip here meant may be defin'd, that religious Adoration which is offer'd up unto God, in the *Publick Aſſemblies* of Chriſtians. The Command of worſhipping God in the Text, was Originally given to the *Jews*; but hereby was denoted and typify'd to us, that more pure and ſpiritual Worſhip, which was to ſucceed that of the *Jews*, and was to be offer'd up unto God under the Goſpel. For there is a rich Vein of Goſpel Truths, which runs through the Old Teſtament, and particularly the Book of the Pſalms, of which one of the Principal is this Command of *Worſhipping God in Publick*, which is as obliging to us Chriſti-

Chriſtians, as ever it was to the *Jews*. As may be made appear from theſe following Conſiderations.

1. Becauſe God has inſtituted and commanded this ſort of Worſhip: 'Tis not only a branch of the Law of Nature, but alſo a Principal part of inſtituted and reveal'd Religion. The Light of Nature will teach us, that there is one firſt Cauſe of all things, who contains in himſelf all thoſe Perfections, in the moſt eminent Degree, which he is pleas'd to communicate to inferiour Beings, and is infinitely more excellent, than the Workmanſhip of his own hands: And ſince 'tis natural for us to proportion our Eſteem and Veneration of things, according to that Worth and Dignity we apprehend to be in them, it will from hence follow, that the Contemplation of theſe infinite Perfections, will require and ought to raiſe, our Praiſe and Adoration. For we receive all that we have from him, and therefore we ought in the moſt ſolemn manner imaginable, to return him the *Praiſe and Glory due unto his Holy Name:* So that whether we contemplate the Excellencies of the Divine Nature in the general, or the Effects of his Goodneſs deriv'd down to us in particular; either of them will afford ſufficient Motives, to oblige us to frequent the *Publick*

lick Worſhip of God. For to what end can we imagine our reaſonable Soul is plac'd in us? Why were our Bodies enlightned with this Ray of Divinity? But that we might be in a Capacity of conſidering, and contemplating the wonderful works of God's Creation and Providence. To what end have we a Power given us of communicating our Thoughts one to another, but that we might joyn together in celebrating the Praiſes of our great Creator? And 'tis for this Reaſon, that the Pſalmiſt calls the Tongue *man's Glory*; becauſe the firſt and chief End of our Speech, was to Praiſe and Glorifie God. From theſe and ſuch like Reflections, the generality of Vertuous and thinking Men, have given their Aſſent to this Truth; That the *Publick Worſhip of God* is abſolutely neceſſary, and our indiſpenſible Duty: And therefore how wide ſoever Men of different Perſwaſions are, from one another in their Way and Manner of worſhipping God (which proceeds from their different Notions of the Perfections of God) yet all Religions in the World centre and agree in this common Truth, and Principle, that the Worſhip of God ought to be *Publick* and Solemn. Pſal. 57. 8.

Publick Worſhip therefore is the Dictate of Nature, a Precept of univerſal and eternal

eternal Obligation: But beſides 'tis our declar'd Duty by poſitive Inſtitution. The *Jews* we know had a ſet and Solemn Worſhip dictated to them by God himſelf, they were under his immediate Guidance and Government, he was their God and their King too, their Civil and Religious Sanctions were blended together, and their *Worſhip* ſo truly *Publick*, That we do not find any expreſly Commanded by the Law of *Moſes*, which was not ſo. And this I the rather mention, becauſe 'tis on all hands agreed, that the Jewiſh Worſhip was a Type of the Chriſtian, and tho' the Ritual part of it was no longer obliging than till the coming of the *Meſſiah*, who was typify'd thereby; yet all thoſe Duties which were founded upon Moral and eternal Reaſons (as *Publick Worſhip* is confeſs'd to be) were to continue to the end of the World. And therefore our Saviour tells us, *That he did not come to deſtroy the Law, but to fulfil it*, (*i. e.*) he came to perform thoſe things which were repreſented by the Types and Ceremonies of the Law, which having had their Completion in him, we might reaſonably expect ſhould paſs away: But he came to confirm and eſtabliſh Moral Duties, to place them in a clearer Light, and to give Mankind juſter Notions of them, and to engage

Matth. 5. 17.

engage us to perform them, by more powerful Motives. To this end he made it his firſt and principal Care, to eſtabliſh the *Publick Worſhip of God*, and to refine it from its Droſs, and to reform it from all thoſe Superſtitions and Abuſes, which in a long Tract of time were crept into it: Becauſe the Purity of Divine Worſhip is the Foundation of all Religion, the Cement of Society, and the Sourſe and Original of all Moral Vertue. To this end our Saviour inſtituted an Evangelical Prieſthood, a particular Order of Men, inveſted with Authority to preach the Goſpel to the whole World, to offer up Publick Prayers, and Thanſgivings unto God, and to unite Men into Societies, for the *Publick*, and more ſolemn Performance of the Duties of Religion, and to gather him a Kingdom or Church through the whole World; (*i. e.*) A Society of Men, who enter into Covenant by Baptiſm, to obey the Authority of our Saviour Chriſt, and to live by thoſe Laws, which he has inſtituted and appointed in his Holy Goſpel.

He therefore who neglects the *Publick Worſhip of God* (which is one of the Principal Inſtitutions of the Chriſtian Religion) doth in effect diſown God's Authority, denies his Saviour, and caſts himſelf out

out of his Protection: And therefore the Apostle so earnestly exhorts the *Hebrews.*

Heb. 10. 25. *Not to forsake the assembling of themselves together,* as being one effectual Means to engage them to *hold fast the Profession of their Faith,* and to secure them from the Commission of that heinous and dangerous Sin, of Apostatizing from the Christian Religion.

2. If we consider the Nature of Divine Worship, it will from thence appear, that *to Worship God Publickly,* is absolutely necessary, and our indispensible Duty. For since Worship is an Acknowledgment of the Excellencies, and Perfections of that Being, whom we adore, 'tis evident that the more *Publick* this Acknowledgment is, the more perfect and acceptable is the Worship in the sight of God; because 'tis more conducive, and answerable to those Ends, for which he at first instituted, and design'd it. Now the Reason why we are oblig'd thus *Publickly* to acknowledge the Excellencies, and Perfections of God, is that we may hereby express the Sense of our poor, indigent, and necessitous Condition, and the infinite Majesty, Power, and Goodness of God; that we receive every thing we possess from this Fountain of Goodness, and depend on him for all that we enjoy: And therefore since we can make him no other Returns, we ought not to with-hold that

that of a verbal Acknowledgment, and the natural Expreſſions of a grateful Mind: And ſince God is Good, not only to every one of us in particular, but to all the whole Race of Mankind; and ſince his moſt valuable, tho' moſt unregarded Favours, are beſtow'd upon us in Common; therefore we ought to joyn together in celebrating his Praiſes, and to expreſs our Thankfulneſs with the greater Veneration, and Solemnity.

3. Conſider the Benefits which accrue both to our ſelves and others, from the *Publick Worſhip of God*. We are Creatures naturally addicted to Imitation, and rather inclin'd to do as others do, than to take their Advice, and believe what they ſay. Example has a ſtrange influence upon us, in matters Spiritual as well as Temporal; our Paſſions are wonderfully rais'd, when by a Holy kind of Emulation, we as it were contend in the Fervency of our Devotion. For as Fire kindles Fire, and turns all other Materials into its own Nature: So a Holy and Chriſtian Zeal will produce its like in the Breaſts of all who behold it. A Man may go on a long time in the neglect of God's Worſhip in private, and too many there are, who feel little or no Remorſe in the Omiſſion of their Cloſet Devotions; but

who can behold the Pious and Devout Soul proſtrate before God, repeating the Prayers of the Church with Fervency and Devotion, and a Congregation united together both in Heart and Voice, but he muſt needs be affected with it: *While he thus muſes the Fire will kindle in his breaſt*, and he cannot forbear *ſpeaking with his tongue the Praiſes of God.* How often have prophane and wicked Wretches, who came to the *Publick Worſhip of God*; either out of Faſhion, or Cuſtom, to look and gaze about them, or on ſome worſe Deſign, been touch'd by a Coal from the Altar? how often have their Hearts glow'd within them, and they have taken up ſerious and Solemn Reſolutions, of ſerving and worſhipping God better for the future? And I am perſwaded were but theſe good Reſolutions ſeconded, did not Men divert thoſe good Thoughts, and put them out of their Minds by Buſineſs or Pleaſure, they would not fail of having a laſting influence on their Lives and Converſations.

Pſal. 39. 3.

Innumerable are the Benefits which we receive, by joyning together in the *Publick Offices of Religion*; which every Pious and Devout Perſon is ſenſible of, tho' 'tis a Difficult matter to form in others a ſutable Notion or Idea of them. Who can declare the wonderful Bleſſings which God

God beſtows on all ſuch as delight in his Sanctuary? Here are thoſe *living waters*, which allay the Thirſt after ſenſual Enjoyments, *that Bread* which is the natural Food and Nouriſhment of our Souls: By by theſe Ordinances our Faith is ſtrengthned, our Hope confirm'd, our Charity enlarg'd, our Devotions render'd more fervent; and by the Force of our united Prayers, we take even Heaven it ſelf. God pours out a double Portion of his Holy Spirit, upon ſuch as frequent his Ordinances, and our Saviour Chriſt has promis'd, that *when two or three are gathered together, he will be in the midſt of them.* Matth. 18. 20. Who then would omit one opportunity of ſerving God in *Publick*? who would neglect to joyn himſelf to the Congregation of God's People one Lord's Day? when he knows not but he loſes that Seaſon of Grace, which would be moſt beneficial to his immortal Soul. Let us therefore neglect no opportunity of ſerving God, for we know not when the Spirit of God will work moſt powerfully on our Hearts. The poor impotent Man had lain a long while at the Pool of *Bethesda*, and yet had he been abſent but that one time when our Saviour came thither, 'tis highly probable he had never been cur'd. And therefore let no excuſe Serve, let no Buſineſs

ſineſs divert us from making our conſtant Approaches unto God's Altar: For *the Spirit blows* when, as well as *where it liſteth*, and we muſt blame our ſelves, if thro' our own neglect, we loſe the Benefit of his Operations. Some indeed pretend, that tho' they are not ſo frequent at the Church, yet they make it up in their Cloſets, but God will not thus be compounded with: Our private Devotions are unqueſtionably our Duty, our particular Wants call for our private Prayers, and our particular Mercies for our private Thankſgivings; but we ſhall not reap any Benefit by them, when they occaſion the neglect of our Duty *in Publick*. When two Duties ſtand in Competition one with another, we ought to apply our Minds to that Duty, whereby moſt Glory will accrue to God, moſt Benefit to our Neighbour, and which will beſt ſerve to promote the good of our own Souls: And ſince all theſe Ends are beſt obtain'd, by the *Publick Worſhip of God*, 'tis but reaſonable that our Private Devotions ſhould give place to it. And yet there is no neceſſity that either of them ſhould be neglected; every good Chriſtian will find convenient Times and Opportunities for both of them: But when there is a neceſſity, that one of them ſhould be omitted, we may aſſure our ſelves God will

will be beſt pleas'd, when we make the moſt *Publick Acknowledgments* of his Goodneſs, and joyn together to implore his Mercy.

Theſe are ſome few of thoſe many Obligations, which ought to prevail with us, to give a conſtant Attendance on the *Publick Worſhip of God.* I proceed to ſhew,

II. That this Worſhip ought to be perform'd, in the moſt ſolemn and decent manner imaginable; in that *Beauty of Holineſs*, which becomes every devout Worſhipper, and which the Text requires of us. That we may underſtand the full import of this Expreſſion, it will be uſeful to conſider, that the words in the Original are differently render'd by Interpreters: Some will have them tranſlated *in ornatu Sanctitatis*; and then they denote that true Faith, and thoſe Holy Affections of Soul, with which every devout Worſhipper ought to approach the Throne of God. Others chuſe rather to render them, *cum decenti Sanctimonio*; which more plainly denotes, That Reverence and Decency of Behaviour, which certainly becomes every one, who ſpeaks to the great Creator and Governour of the World. The Septuagint following the literal Sence of the Words reads it, τῇ αὐλῇ ἁγίᾳ; with reference to the Place, in which God was

worship'd amongst the *Jews*; denoting to us, that the fittest Place for the Publick Worship of God, is that which is Consecrated and Dedicated to that Purpose: That God will afford his more immediate Presence in that Place, *In which he has chosen to set his Name*, and will there dispence to us the larger Effusions of his Grace. For tho' God is present at all Times, and in all Places, and hearkens even to the Sighs of the Prisoner, who lies in the deepest Dungeon; Yet the Church is as it were his Throne, from whence he gives *Publick Audience*, where we have most reason to expect a speedy Answer to our Petitions. And therefore the Psalmist so often repeats that Exhortation, *of comming and appearing before God in his Courts. And Strength and Beauty are in his Sanctuary.* The 6th. and 8th. Verses of this Psalm.

Ezra. 6. 12.

I shall take in all these different Versions, and then they will give us the meaning of worshipping God in the *Beauty of Holiness*, in its utmost Latitude. Which consists in these three things.

I. In the good Disposition of our Souls.

II. In the becoming and suitable Behaviour of our Bodies.

3. In

III. In the Decency and Solemnity of those Circumstances, which attend our Worship.

1. The *Beauty of Holiness* consists in the good Disposition of our Souls; when our Understandings are fill'd with glorious Ideas of God's Power, Majesty, and Goodness; our Wills resign'd to his Divine Will; and our Affections drawn out after him; when the Consideration of his Majesty, produces an Holy Awe and Reverence in our Souls; his Truth and Fidelity, Trust and Reliance on him; his Goodness, Gratitude and Thankfulness for his Mercies, Love and Charity towards all Men; in short, when the Contemplation on God's glorious Attributes, begets in our Souls, Affections suitable to the Divine Nature, then are our Minds duly qualified and prepared, to perform that Spiritual Worship which God is best pleas'd with, and takes most delight in. *For God is a Spirit, and will be worshipp'd in Spirit and in Truth.* And therefore 'tis no wonder, that of so many, who frequent the *Publick Worship of God*, so few reap Benefit by it, because the Generality of Worshippers render themselves uncapable of receiving those Blessings, which God offers them in his Holy Ordinances: They John 4 24.

come into God's Courts carelesly and negligently, without a due Sence of the importance of those Duties they are going to perform; their Minds are full of vain, worldly, and sinful Thoughts, polluted with carnal Desires, and Affections; and then no wonder that they take so little delight in the Service of God, and reap no more Benefit by it.

2. If we would worship God in the *Beauty of Holiness*, we must comport our selves after such a manner, as is sutable to the Duty we are about; and express the Zeal and Fervency of our Souls, by becoming and expressive Gestures of our Bodies. Did we consider, That *the place we tread is holy ground*; that God and his Holy Angels look down upon us, and behold us; the House of God would strike a greater Awe and Reverence on our Minds, than the Throne of any temporal Prince; which will not fail of exacting from us the worship of our Bodies. *How dreadful is this place* (says *Jacob*;) *This is no other, but the House of God, this is the gate of Heaven.*

Exod. 3. 5.

Gen. 28. 17.

A due Sense also of the importance of the Business we are about, would have the same Effect; for were we begging of God some temporal Blessing, which we might well be without, indifferency in our Behaviour

haviour would better become us; but when the eternal Welfare of our Souls lies at ſtake, when we are Candidates for an everlaſting Inheritance, we cannot be too earneſt, we cannot be too Devout; had we a thouſand hands, and a thouſand tongues, they might all of them be employ'd to expreſs the Devotion of our Souls, and the Fervency of our Affections. 'Tis not a bare joyning in the Prayers of the Church, a repeating the Reſponſes, and putting our ſelves in that Poſture the Rubrick enjoyns; 'tis not the avoiding the Indecencies of a prophane or clowniſh Worſhipper, I am now pleading for; this the Cuſtom of the place, good Manners, and gentile Education, will exact from us: But that we go farther, and by the Humility, Gravity, and Compoſedneſs of our Behaviour, ſtir up Holy Affections in our own Minds, and encourage others to imitate our Example.

Laſtly, the *Beauty of Holineſs* doth alſo conſiſt, in the Decency and Solemnity of thoſe Circumſtances, which Accompany our Worſhip. Which tho' they conſiſt of Rites and Ceremonies in their own Nature indifferent, yet are ordain'd to an excellent end, and are of admirable uſe for the promoting Devotion, and Uniformity in the Service of God. The Generality

of

of Mankind are very much influenc'd by the ſhews and appearances of things, and whatſoever is pleaſing to the Eye, has an eaſier Admiſſion, and makes a deeper Impreſſion on the Mind. And therefore it has been the Care of Holy and Devout Chriſtians, in all Ages of the World, when Religion had the Countenance of Publick Authority, and was in a flouriſhing Condition, to build Churches for the *Publick Worſhip of God*, to keep them in good Repair, to furniſh them with ſuch Ornaments, that the Worſhip of God may be perform'd orderly, decently, and ſolemnly, and appear regular, and beautiful in the Eyes of the Beholders; and hereby raiſe up in their Minds awful, and reverent Thoughts of that God, who is there worſhipped. For 'tis a Sign that Religion is vile and cheap in the Eyes of thoſe Men, who (as the Prophet ſpeaks) *can ſuffer the houſe of the Lord to lie waſt, whilſt they dwell in ceiled houſes*: They ſpare no Coſt to raiſe, *beautifie*, and adorn their own Houſes, *They ceile them with Cedar, and paint them with Vermilion*; and yet will not contribute the leaſt *Mite* to the Service of the Temple. *Quorſum perditio hæc?* is their uſual demand, To what end is all this Coſt and Charges? were it not better, that all this Money was ſpar'd, and given to the Poor?

Jer. 22. 14.

Poor? To whom I answer in the words of a Learned Knight (which probably will give better Satisfaction, than if spoken from the mouth of a Clergy-man) "Tho' the Ornaments (says he) of such "places as are Dedicated to God's Service, "ought to be rather Grave, than Pompous; yet it could never sink into my "Heart to imagine, that the allowance for "furnishing them out, should be measur'd "by the Scanty Rule of meer Necessity "(a Proportion so low, that Nature it self "has gone beyond it, even in the most ignoble Creature) or that God has enrich'd "this lower World, with such wonderful "Variety of things, *Beautiful and Glorious*, that they might serve only for the "pampering mortal Man in his Pride; "and that to the immediate Service of the "great Creator, Lord, and Giver of them; "only baser, cheaper, and less *Beautiful* "things ought to be employ'd: Especially seeing, that as in Princes Courts, so "in the Service of God, this outward "State and Glory being well dispos'd; "doth beget, encrease, quicken, and nourish, the inward Reverence, and respect-"ful Devotion, which is due to so Sove-"reign a Majesty. Thus this truly Pious and Devout, as well as excellently Learned Person. To whom Assents the voice

Sir Edwin Sands *in his* Speculum Europæ.

of

of all Antiquity; 'tis well known, what Care was taken, that the Tabernacle of *Moſes* ſhould be as rich, and as *Beautiful as* Art could make it; in what Glory, Splendour, and *Beauty*, the Temple of *Solomon* was built; how deſirous *David* was to have been the Founder of it: But ſince that Honour was reſerv'd for his Son *Solomon*, he made it his buſineſs to provide Materials, and tells us, *Moreover becauſe I have ſet my Affection to the houſe of my God, I have of my own proper Goods, of gold and ſilver, which I have given to the houſe of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy houſe, even three thouſand talents of gold of Ophir, and ſeven thouſand talents of refin'd ſilver.* And when this Houſe was deſtroy'd, a ſecond Temple was built, which tho' much inferour to the former, yet for *Beauty*, and Magnificency was the wonder of the whole World.

1 Chron. 29. 3.

And thus 'twas not only under the Law, but from the firſt planting of Chriſtianity; as ſoon as ever the Chriſtian Religion was tolerated by the Civil Magiſtrate, their great Care was to build Churches, for the more Decent and *Solemn Worſhip of God.* And when thoſe Churches which were overthrown in the *Dioclefian* Perſecution, were re-edified, adorn'd, and *Beautified*, under

der *Maximinus*: The Hiſtorian tells us, That the Hearts of all Men were fill'd with a Divine Joy, to ſee thoſe Churches rais'd to a greater heighth, and *adorn'd* with a more ſplendid Magnificency, than their firſt Founders had beſtow'd upon them. 'Tis plain to any one who conſults Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that as the Chriſtian Religion encreas'd, and *Kings* and *Emperors* became *the nurſing Fathers of the Church*; more ſtately and magnificent Structures were built, and Dedicated to the Service of God: No Coſt was ſpar'd, nothing was thought too good for this ſacred Uſe: The whole Chriſtian World did ſeem to rejoyce, that they had the Liberty of beſtowing their Goods to this holy Purpoſe, and their profuſe Liberality was ſpoken of with Honour, and Approbation. 'Tis confeſs'd there are ſome Paſſages in the Fathers, which ſeem to condemn theſe expenſive Buildings; but then 'twas only comparatively, when there was ſo much laid out upon theſe Structures, that there was nothing left to beſtow on the living Temples of the Lord; and they had ſuch a miſtaken Zeal for adorning Churches, that they ſtarv'd the Poor; and did not provide a competent Allowance for thoſe who ſerv'd at the Altar.

Euſeb. *lib.* 10. *cap.* 2.

St. Jerom. *ad Nepotian. de vitâ Clerici*

Ad Demetr. Epiſt. 12.

Ad Gaudentium.

And now what remains, but that we who profeſs our ſelves Members of the Church of

of *England*, endeavour to adorn our Profeſſion by a diligent and conſtant Attendance on the *Publick Offices of Religion*, by a due Preparation of our Minds for theſe Holy Duties, and a devout Comportment of our ſelves in the performance of them, and a Filial regard to all thoſe Devout Rites and Solemnities enjoyn'd us by our Superiours: That ſo we who are now Members of the Church Militant, may as far as the frailty of our Condition will permit, reſemble that hidden Dignity and Glory, wherewith the Church Triumphant in Heaven is glorified, *and Worſhip our God in the Beauty of Holineſs.*

SER-

SERMON VI.

1 THES. V. 22.

Abſtain from all appearance of Evil.

THE latter part of this Chapter is a Recapitulation of ſeveral Truths deliver'd in the Body of this Epiſtle, between which there is no ſtrict Connection, neither have they any exact dependance one upon another; only the words of the Text, and thoſe which go immediately before, do bear ſome Relation. For in the Verſe before the Text the Apoſtle gives Directions concerning our Practice of thoſe things which are Good: We muſt carefully examine all things by the Touch-ſtone of God's word, whether Doctrines or Practices, and we muſt diſtinguiſh between thoſe which ſeem and appear to be good, and thoſe which are really ſo; We muſt reject the one, and hold faſt the other. *Prove all things, hold faſt*

faſt that which is good: But we muſt take quite different Meaſures, in relation to thoſe things which are Evil, which either are plainly contrary to the Law of God, or which we have any probable Reaſon to ſuſpect are ſo: *We muſt abſtain from all appearance of Evil.* There is indeed another Interpretation of theſe words; thoſe who follow the Syriac Verſion render them, *Abſtain from every kind of Evil:* But ſince this Word is not ſo rendred in any other place of the New Teſtament, nor is there any Reaſon from the Scope and Coherence of the words to tranſlate it ſo, I ſhall rather chuſe with the Generality of Interpreters, to follow the vulgar Tranſlation, and render it as in my Text, *Abſtain from all appearance of Evil*; and the rather, becauſe the poſitive part of this Precept, is contained in other places of the Holy Writ.

Phil. 4. 8.

The words thus underſtood may be conſider'd, either as they relate to the Articles of our Faith; or, as a Rule for the directing our Lives and Converſations: The latter of theſe is chiefly intended in the Text; and therefore my preſent Enquiry ſhall be, What thoſe Actions and Practices are which have the *appearance of Evil*, and from which we are commanded to *Abſtain*. That I may give a more plain

plain and ſatisfactory Anſwer to this Queſtion: I ſhall conſider theſe words, 1. Abſolutely; and 2. As they bear a Reſpect and Relation to our Neighbour.

Firſt, Taken abſolutely, they may be reſolv'd into this Propoſition.

That we muſt not do any Action, which either really is, or has the Bluſh, or *appearance of Evil.*

Secondly, If conſider'd with Reſpect to our Neighbour they import,

That we muſt abſtain from all ſuch Actions which may probably be an occaſion of Offence, or Scandal to our Brother.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the words abſolutely, and then they import theſe three things.

I. That we muſt abſtain from every Action, Word, or Thought, which is contrary to the Divine Law.

II. That we muſt abſtain even from lawful Actions, if they appear Evil to us.

III. That we muſt abſtain from all ſuch Actions, which have any Tendency to incite, inſnare, and tempt us into Sin.

1. That we muſt abſtain from every Action, Word, or Thought, which is con-

trary to the Divine Law, though it may appear of never ſo little Concernment. Whatſoever is a breach of God's Law, tho' in the ſmalleſt, and moſt inconſiderable Circumſtance, muſt be carefully avoided by us; becauſe every ſuch Tranſgreſſion will expoſe us to God's Anger, and by Conſequence render us liable to everlaſting Puniſhment. Let us therefore carefully avoid even the lighter breaches of our Duty, ſet us make a Covenant with our Eyes, and ſet a watch over the thoughts of our hearts, and take Care that we do not offend with our Tongue; remembring that at the laſt day, every idle word muſt be accounted for, and that in God's Book, all the Thoughts and Intents of our Hearts are recorded. Some Sins are indeed of a deeper Dye than others, and do admit of more heinous Aggravations: Sins committed wilfully and preſumptuouſly, are more hateful to God, waſt the Conſcience more, and by conſequence are more dangerous to the ſafety of our Souls, than thoſe Sins into which we are betray'd by the frailty of our Natures, and the ſurprize of a Temptation. But if we conſider Sin in it ſelf, and in its own Nature, no Sin can be ſmall or little, or as the Papiſts ſpeak, Venial; for every Sin is *a willful Tranſgreſſion of the Law of God*, and whoever

1 Joh. 3. 4.

ever wilfully offends God, justly incurrs the Sentence of eternal Damnation: Nay even the lighter breaches of our Duty, may be attended with such Circumstances and Aggravations, as may render them of more pernicious Consequence unto us, than those which in their own Nature imply a greater Guilt; a small Injury done on purpose, to vilifie and reproach us, is resented more heinously, than when we sustain a greater Damage thro' the Folly and Inadvertency of our Neighbour; and therefore we have Reason to conclude, That the least Sin willfully committed, and obstinately persevered in, will deprive us utterly of God's Favour and Protection. How vain and dangerous then, is that known distinction of Sin amongst the Papists, into Sins venial, and Sins mortal (*i. e.*) as they explain it, into such Sins as do deserve eternal Damnation, and such as only deserve some Temporary Punishment? Especially since under the Head of venial Sins, they rank the grossest Enormities; so that even Murder shall become a venial Sin, if committed to maintain a Man's Honour, or under Pretence of returning some trivial Affront. A Box on the Ear, has been made by some Jesuitical Casuists, a justifiable Provocation for a Man to imbrue his hands in the Blood of his Neighbour;

tho' our Saviour has in expreſs Terms determin'd the quite contrary; ſo plainly do theſe Men make void the Law of God, by their Traditions and Diſtinctions. But,

2. We muſt abſtain even from lawful and juſtifiable Actions, if they appear Evil to us. For we are told, That *whatſoever is not of Faith is ſin* (*i. e.*) whoſoever doth any Action without that perſwaſion and aſſurance of Mind, of the Lawfulneſs of his doings (which is here call'd Faith) he ſins in ſo doing. 'Tis therefore our Duty to Act according to the preſent Perſwaſion of our own Minds; and having us'd the beſt means to inform our Conſciences of what is good and lawful, convenient and moſt expedient to be done, and by conſequence moſt pleaſing unto God; to walk according to our knowledge, in Uprightneſs and Integrity: And there is no Queſtion, but he who thus Acts according to the Light of his own Conſcience, and performs what he ſincerely believes to be his Duty, will be more excuſable when he doth amiſs; than that Man who thinks he Acts in Contradiction to the Divine Will, and his own Knowledge, tho' he ſhould happen to be in the right: For no Actions are good, without the rectitude of the Will of him who performs them; and therefore he who reſolves upon

Rom. 14. 23.

on an Action which he believes to be a Tranſgreſſion of the Divine Law, doth violence to his own Conſcience, and commits a very heinous Sin, tho' the Action in it ſelf ſhould be lawful and Praiſe-worthy. For our Conſcience is God's Vicegerent in our Souls, and ſuſtains the part of a Judge, as well as a Witneſs and Accuſer; and ſuppoſing our Conſcience duly inform'd, whilſt we follow its Determinations, we cannot do amiſs. But yet this is not ſo to be underſtood, as if we were hereby excus'd from performing a known, and abſolutely neceſſary Duty; only becauſe we are not fully ſatisfy'd, in the Lawfulneſs of every minute Circumſtance, which is requir'd to the performance of it. This would adminiſter Fuel to ſuch perplexity and ſcruples in the Service of God, as would render Chriſt's eaſie Yoke far more Burthenſome, than all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewiſh-Law. If therefore we are commanded by an unqueſtionable Authority, to perform an Action which our Conſciences tell us, is lawful and neceſſary to be done; our Chriſtian Prudence will direct us not to be too nice, in weighing every particular Circumſtance, but in this Caſe to prefer our Submiſſion to a known Law of God, or our lawful Governours, before the trivial

Doubts, of an unſetled and wavering Conſcience: And the Reaſon is plain, becauſe the willful Omiſſion of a known Duty, is certainly a grievous Sin; whereas we are not certain, whether the performing of it, with that queſtionable Circumſtance, is ſo or no; and therefore common Prudence will direct us, rather to venture upon ſome Circumſtances of an Action we are not ſo fully ſatisfy'd in, than on the Omiſſion of a known Duty, which is certainly a Sin; and to abſtain from thoſe Actions which are manifeſtly Evil, rather than from thoſe which have only the *Appearance* of it: Thus a common Soldier is oblig'd to execute the Commands of his Superiour Officer, a Servant of his Maſter, without playing the Caſuiſt, and nicely enquiring into the Reaſon of them; they are only the hands which are to execute what the Head Commands, and if the Action is not plainly Contradictory to the known Laws of God or the Land, they ought to Obey: Their Superiours will be anſwerable for all the leſſer Defects, whilſt there will be great Allowances made to that Man, who for the maintenance of Order and Diſcipline, Peace and Charity, not only Sacrifices his own private Opinions, but ſquares his Actions in things of leſſer moment, ſo,

as

as to comply with the great Ends of Government. But,

3. We muſt abſtain from ſuch Actions, as have any Tendency to incite, enſnare, and tempt us unto Sin; and avoid as far as poſſibly we can, all ſuch things as are the neceſſary Occaſions, and Incentives unto Evil: For he that wills the Cauſe, wills the neceſſary Effects, and Conſequences which follow thereupon; he that expoſes himſelf to Temptation is Blame-worthy, tho' he doth not fall into it, nor is overpower'd thereby. 'Tis the Buſineſs and Duty of a reaſonable Being, by reflecting on its paſt Actions, to collect from thence, what will be the neceſſary Effects and Conſequences of things; and to avoid not only thoſe things which are Evil in the leaſt Degree, but alſo all thoſe which were the Inlets and Inducements to it. The true ſpiritual Warrior will not have any Parley with his Enemy, he ſtands continually on his Guard, and will not ſuffer him to make the leaſt Approaches towards him; well knowing that he is only then ſecure when his Enemies have not the Power and Ability to hurt him; and that the firſt ſtep towards his Ruin is to be ſecure; and to fanſie he ſtands *ſo faſt, that he can never be moved.* It will be therefore the wiſeſt Courſe for every one to conſi- Pſal. 30. 6.

der; what Sins he is moſt addicted to, what Vices bear the greateſt ſway in his Temper and Conſtitution, how he comes to be betray'd into theſe Sins, what were the Occaſions, the Motives and Inducements to them; and let him take up the Reſolution of the Pſalmiſt, *I will ſet no wicked thing before mine Eyes*, I will remove far from me all ſuch Objects and Examples, Shews and Appearances, as may prove a ſnare to me, and betray me into Sin.

Pſal. 101. 3.

Thus for Example, If he finds himſelf of a malicious and revengeful Temper, let him as much as poſſibly he can avoid being Angry; let him endeavour to ſubdue and keep under his Paſſion, when firſt rais'd, and throw theſe Coals out of his Boſom as ſoon as he can, for 'tis impoſſible that he ſhould retain them long there, and not be burnt: Anger maintain'd and encourag'd turns naturally either into Fury, or Malice; and when once it degenerates into either of theſe Deviliſh Tempers of Mind, who knows what will be the miſchievous Effects of it? That ſpark which might eaſily have been ſuppreſs'd, will be ungovernable when blown up into a Flame; and therefore 'tis the ſafeſt way, either to bring our ſelves to ſuch a meek and humble Temper

of

of Mind, as not to be angry at all: Or to reſtrain it within its due Bounds, and hereby prevent its being criminal and ſinful. If he finds himſelf addicted to Uncleanneſs and Luſt, let him *make a Covenant with his Eyes*, and abſtain from all ſuch things, as *make proviſion for the Fleſh*; let him give himſelf up to Faſting and Prayer, and uſe ſuch wholſome Mortifications, as may bring his Appetites into Subjection to the reaſonable Powers of his Soul. If Drunkenneſs is his darling Vice, let *him not look upon the wine when it is red, when it gives its colour in the Cup, when it moveth it ſelf aright, but conſider that at laſt it biteth like a Serpent, and ſtingeth like an Adder. Let him put a knife to his throat* (*in Solomons phraſe*) when he is in pleaſant and agreeable Company, (*i. e.*) conſider the Danger he is in of abuſing thoſe Bleſſings of God to Intemperance and Luxury, which were deſign'd for his Comfort and Support; and let him as much as poſſibly he can avoid all ſuch Places and Company, as are likely to promote Exceſs and Riot. Thus we find that *Joſeph* being ſollicited by his Laſcivious Miſtreſs, to defile his Maſter's Bed, would not ſo much as hearken unto her, *or tarry with her in the houſe*. The *Nazarenes* being forbid the uſe of Wine, would not

Rom. 13. 14.

Prov. 23. 31, 32.

Gen. 39. 10.

not eat the husk and kernel of the Grape; nay ſo careful were they to avoid all the Temptations to Sin, that they would not ſo much as paſs through a Vineyard, leſt they ſhould covet the forbidden Fruit. Very remarkable is the Example of that excellent Emperour *Theodoſius*, who being betray'd to ſome raſh and ſinful Actions by the ſudden tranſports of his Paſſion, oblig'd himſelf never to execute any matter of moment, till he had firſt repeated the Lord's Prayer; that by giving himſelf time for ſecond and more ſober Thoughts, he might calmly deliberate what he ought to do. Many more Inſtances might be added, were it needful; this being a Rule of daily uſe, and practis'd by Heathens as well as Chriſtians.

And now having endeavour'd to ſtate this Queſtion, how we ought to *abſtain from all appearance of Evil* in matters Practical, in Relation to our ſelves, I ſhall proceed to ſhew,

Secondly, How we ought to *abſtain from all appearance of Evil* with Relation to others; for the doing good to others, is as abſolutely neceſſary, as the being good our ſelves; and our great Buſineſs in this World, next to the Salvation of our own Souls, is the being beneficial to our Neighbour,

bour, and the endeavouring by all ways poſſible to promote his Spiritual and Temporal welfare; whereby we ſhall not only pleaſe God and glorifie him, but purſue our own true Intereſt alſo: For ſince every Man has a ſhare in the good of that Society in which he lives, whatſoever benefit accrues to the Community, muſt in the end redound upon every particular Member of it; and therefore the beſt way to ſecure to our ſelves the Help and Aſſiſtance of others, when we have occaſion for it; is to be as uſeful and helpful, as poſſibly we can be to thoſe who are embark'd with us in the ſame common Intereſt. *For a good Man one would even dare to die* (ſays the Apoſtle.) Goodneſs or a Charitable diſpoſition towards our Neighbour (*i. e.*) an Inclination to do all the Good we are able to all Men, is a Temper of Mind, which carries ſuch endearing Charms along with it, that a Man would rather venture his own Life, than ſuch a Benefactor to Mankind ſhould be depriv'd of his: And therefore 'tis both our Duty and Intereſt, to employ all thoſe Talents God has entruſted us with for the common Good, and to lay out our Time and Thoughts in being beneficial to thoſe amongſt whom we live; in inſtructing the Ignorant, reproving the faulty, making

Rom. 5. 9.

Peace

Peace amongſt ſuch as are at Variance, and adminiſtring to all the Neceſſities of our Brother, and expending in works of Charity, whatſoever we have more than will make a comfortable Proviſion for our ſelves and Families, according to that Station and Condition in which God has plac'd us in the World. This is a Duty laid down negatively in the Text. We muſt *abſtain from all appearance of Evil.* (*i. e.*) We muſt ſet ſo ſtrict a Watch over all our Words and Actions, that we neither ſpeak nor Act any thing which may be to the Prejudice, or Offence of our Brother: we muſt not only take Care, that we be not openly injurious to him, or do him wrong in his Perſon, Eſtate, or Good Name; but we muſt avoid ſpeaking any word that looks like an Injury, or has tho' but an oblique Tendency to his Diſparagement and Diſgrace, or which has any Probability of being miſ-interpreted for an Affront; if we foreſee it may draw any ill Conſequence after it, or give him any Cauſe of juſt Offence, we ought to reſtrain our ſelves, and by no means to utter it. And if ſo, then herein is imply'd, that we do to our Neighbour all the good Turns which lie in our Power, that we love him as our ſelves, and make our own Self-love the rule and meaſure of our Words, and

and Actions towards him, and in all things *dealing with him, as we our ſelves* if we were in the ſame Circumſtances, *would deſire to be dealt withal.* All theſe poſitive Duties are contain'd in the words of the Text, and as ſtrictly enjoyn'd us, and as Emphatically expreſs'd, as they could be by any poſitive Command. Matth. 7. 12.

This is a Duty dictated to us by the Light of Nature, enjoyn'd us almoſt in every Page of the New Teſtament, and enforc'd by the moſt powerful Inducements, our unqueſtionable Intereſt, both here and hereafter. A Duty which God ſeems ſo concern'd for, that he has declar'd he had rather diſpence with his own immediate Service, than it ſhould be omitted; *he is better pleas'd with Mercy* (*i. e.* doing good to our Neighbour,) *than with Sacrifice*: A Duty which even the worſt of Men, thoſe who ſeem to have caſt off all Fear of God, and Senſe of Religion think themſelves obliged to perform. For a Senſe and Principle of Honour, is ſufficient to engage Men to bear a ſincere Affection to their Countrey and their Friend, to be juſt and faithful in their Dealings, and punctual obſervers of their Word. We may find Examples enough amongſt the Heathens, of thoſe who have been Patriots to their Country, and have given the world the moſt Matth. 9. 13.

generous

generous Inſtances of an inviolable Friendſhip; and therefore I ſhall urge no more Arguments for the performance of ſo plain and neceſſary a Duty, but proceed to lay down ſome Rules to direct us in the Practice of it. And ſince our Actions are either Good, or Evil, or Indifferent, I ſhall lay down three general Rules, in Relation to every one of theſe: And,

I. We muſt not be ſo deſirous of doing good to our Neighbour, as to do any Action in its own Nature, or by neceſſary Conſequence Evil; tho' we are aſſur'd ſome great good might be effected thereby.

II. We muſt ſometimes omit even good Actions, when they may probably be the Occaſion of ſome Evil, or a reaſonable Offence may be taken at the performance of them.

III. In things indifferent, 'tis our Duty many times to abridge our ſelves in our Chriſtian Liberty, for the good of our Brother, and to *abſtain* from ſuch things which we foreſee will give him juſt occaſion of Scandal and Offence. And,

1. We muſt not do the leaſt evil Action under this Pretence, that much Glory will accrue to God, or much good to our Neigh-

Neighbour thereby; for God has not given us any Permiſſion, much leſs has he laid upon us any Neceſſity of committing the leaſt Sin, tho' upon never ſo plauſible a Pretence; he has chalk'd out to us the plain Path of Integrity and Honeſty, and has plac'd a *Monitor* within us, which continually gives us this Advice, *This is the way* Iſa. 30. 21. *walk therein*; and whenever we go aſtray through the Sollicitation of a prevailing Luſt, he recalls us unto the Practice of our Duty. As the end to which all our Actions ought to tend, is Holy; ſo he has appointed ſuch means to attain it, as are pure and Holy too; and has given us ſufficient Power to do our Duty, without making uſe of any indirect means. It highly derogates from the Honour of an abſolutely good and all powerful Being to fanſie, that he cannot bring about his Deſigns by juſt and lawful means; or that he has any occaſion for the Sins of Men to advance his Glory. What can any Man have to ſay for himſelf more than *Uzza* had, 1 *Chron.* 13. 9. who driving the Cart in which the Ark of God was plac'd, and ſeeing the Oxen ſtumble, ſo that the Ark was in manifeſt Danger of falling, put forth his hand and took hold of the Ark, which was only lawful for the Prieſts to do; and we are told Verſe 10.

That

That the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he ſmote him, becauſe he put his hand to the Ark and he died there before God. St. *Paul* has plainly determin'd this Point with a God forbid. *And not rather as we are ſlanderouſly reported of, and as ſome affirm that we ſay, Let us do Evil that Good may come, whoſe Damnation is juſt.* The Almighty Arm of God is ſufficient for the Government of the World; and ſince he can bring about the wiſe Deſigns of his Providence, by an immediate Act of his Power, he has no need of our Aſſiſtance: And therefore when we venture upon any unlawful Action out of an honeſt Deſign (as we think) of doing good, we uſurp God's Prerogative, and interpoſe in that which doth not belong to us: Like undiſciplin'd Soldiers we run out of our Ranks, and leave the Poſts in which we were plac'd; and tho' we may do ſome Service, yet we muſt expect to be puniſh'd for our Mutiny and Diſobedience. And for the moſt part God blaſts the Deſigns of ſuch Men, who care not what means they make uſe of to bring them about: They are generally unſucceſsful in their Enterprizes, and convinc'd by fatal Experience, that the moſt hopeful Attempts prove Abortive, unleſs proſper'd and protected by the Divine

Rom. 3. 8. 8.

vine Grace and Bleſſing; thus it is for the moſt part, but whenever it proves otherwiſe, and God ſees it fit to permit evil Men to proſper for ſome time, yet there is always ſome fatal Calamity or other, which either attends, or follows ſuch ſinful Actions; and puts a plain difference between the Uprightneſs of the Righteous, and the crooked and perverſe Ways of the wicked. Let us therefore never be prevail'd on to do the leaſt Evil, tho' for a good End; for God has obliged us to do no more Good, than lawfully we can do; nay Good ceaſes to be ſo, and turns into Evil, when brought about by unwarrantable Means: For to a good Action 'tis neceſſary that every Circumſtance do concur, and that the means as well as the end is agreeable to the Laws of God; tho' a Deficiency in any one Circumſtance is ſufficient to denominate it an evil Action. 'Tis therefore our wiſeſt Courſe to make the Law of God, the Rule of all our Actions, and he who is juſtly ſenſible how often he tranſgreſſes this Law, will never be guilty of the Folly, of endeavouring to be righteous over-much, and to do what God has not made his Duty. But this is not all. For,

2. It may ſo happen, that a good Action lawfully may and ought to be o-

mitted, when ſome Evil may proceed, or ſome Scandal may be taken at the performance of it. For tho' we are always oblig'd to do all the good we can, yet we are not oblig'd to do it at all times; 'tis in many Caſes left to our own Prudence to determine, what times and places are moſt fitting and convenient for the performance of ſome Duties. The poſitive Command of God ought certainly to be obey'd and executed, when commanded us, how pernicious ſoever the Conſequence of it may ſeem to be; becauſe the Omiſſion of a known Duty is a wilful Sin: Yet when only the Duty in general is commanded us, and the time and manner of the performance of it left to our own Diſcretion; then our Chriſtian Prudence will direct us ſo to perform it, as moſt Glory may redound to God, moſt good to our Neighbour, and we our ſelves may reap moſt benefit thereby. Our Saviour Chriſt doth exhort us to imitate the *Wiſ-*
Matth. 10. 16. *dom of the Serpent, as well as the harmleſs Simplicity of the Dove*; and 'tis the great Wiſdom of a good Man to manage and husband wiſely the Opportunities of doing good, that every Duty may be perform'd in its proper time and place; for as he who gives ſeaſonably is ſaid to confer a double Benefit: So he that has the

Skill

Skill to fit out every Duty with its proper Circumſtances, will entitle himſelf to the more excellent Reward in the World to come. For it ſometimes happens that an indifferent Action perform'd in due time and place, may have an admirable influence on thoſe who behold it, and be the occaſion of much good, and then every good Chriſtian ought to embrace ſo happy an Opportunity: At another time an Action which in it ſelf is Good and Praiſe-worthy may be the occaſion, that God may be blaſphem'd, and our Neighbour injur'd; and then 'tis certainly our Duty to omit that good Action, till ſome more convenient Opportunity preſents it ſelf. This is the meaning of that excellent Rule of the Schools, *Affirmativa præcepta obligant ſemper, ſed non ad ſemper,* (*i. e.*) though the poſitive Commands of God are always obliging, yet they do not always limit us to the preſent time of performing them. I ſhall make this plain by an inſtance or two; to reprove thoſe who do amiſs, eſpecially thoſe who are committed to our Care, and live under our Juriſdiction, is our unqueſtionable Duty, and enjoyn'd us by the Laws both of God and Man, but when this Duty muſt be perform'd, is left to our Chriſtian Prudence and Diſcretion; for

many times, it will be neceſſary to wink at their Faults, and paſs by their Miſcarriages, and to leave the Correction of them till ſome other Opportunity, when we have the Proſpect of doing more good by it, herein following the Advice of our Bleſſed Saviour, *Give not that which is holy unto Dogs, neither caſt ye your Pearls before Swine, leaſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you*: To give our Alms in Publick may ſometimes be our Duty, that we may encourage others to be liberal to the Poor, and *ſo let our light ſhine before men, that others ſeeing our good works may glorifie our father which is in heaven*: But when this End is ſo far from being obtain'd by the Publick Diſtribution of our Alms, that it gives others occaſion to believe that we are Proud and Vain-glorious, and do it only to be ſeen of Men; then the more private our Almsdeeds are, the more acceptable they are unto God, *And our heavenly Father who ſees in ſecret will reward us openly.* It were eaſie to heap up many more Inſtances of this Nature, but theſe may ſuffice; and therefore I ſhall only add, That ſince it muſt be left to every ones Prudence, when theſe Duties are to be perform'd, and when omitted, therefore no ſtrict Rules can be given for the performance of them, but only

Mat. 7. 6.

Matth. 5. 16.

Matth. 6. 18.

ly in the General we make this uſeful remark; That then we Act with the greateſt Prudence and Diſcretion, when we purſue thoſe Ends, for which thoſe Duties were at firſt inſtituted and commanded us: Thus he Adminiſters Reproof beſt, who moſt prevails upon the Perſon Reprov'd to reform and amend; and he gives his Alms to the beſt Purpoſe, whoſe Charity is moſt extenſive and ſeaſonable, in relieving the Neceſſities of his poor Brother.

3. In things indifferent we ought to abridge our ſelves in our Chriſtian Liberty for the good of our Neighbour, and to *abſtain* from ſuch things as we foreſee, will give him juſt occaſion of Scandal and Offence. For though every Man is the neareſt to himſelf, and that firſt Principle of ſelf Preſervation engages us in the firſt place to conſult our Good and Happineſs; yet where ſome great benefit will accrue to my Neighbour, by an Action which brings to me only ſome inconſiderable Loſs and Detriment, I ought to remove the Conſideration of my own Advantage, to make room for the greater Good of my Neighbour: And ſo on the other hand, when I foreſee that my Neighbour will receive any prejudice by any indifferent Action of mine (*i. e.* by any Action which I am no ways oblig'd either to do, or not to do)

I ought to *abſtain* from it: Now becauſe this is a general Rule which will admit of ſome Difficulty in the Application of it, I ſhall endeavour to give ſome more particular Directions for the Government of our Practice herein. And,

1. We muſt abſtain from all ſuch indifferent Actions, as we foreſee will be a ſnare in the way of our Neighbour, and tempt him to the Commiſſion of any Sin, or the Omiſſion of any known Duty. For ſince a good Man cannot but be troubled and afflicted, when he ſees his Neighbour fall into any Sin, and hereby diſhonour God, and ruine his own Soul; therefore it muſt needs be incumbent upon him to uſe all means poſſible to prevent it, and rather to retrench himſelf in his lawful, and innocent Enjoyments, than his Neighbour ſhould receive any prejudice thereby. As for Example, the drinking a Health is an indifferent Action, which I may do or let alone, without the Commiſſion of any Sin; but when I foreſee that the beginning of a Health, or the drinking of it, will be a Shooing-horn to Intemperance, and an occaſion of drinking more than is fit; or when ſome in the Company may be diſguſted thereby, or it may be a probable occaſion of breeding Differences and Quarrels amongſt

amongſt them; then at ſuch a time and in ſuch a place, 'tis my Duty to abſtain from it. Innocent and harmleſs Recreations are certainly indifferent Actions, but when the ſpending our time in theſe Recreations, will occaſion the neglect of our Duty, either to God or Man; when they will be a ſnare in the way of our Neighbour, either by betraying him into extravagant and ſinful Paſſions, or ſpending that Time and Subſtance which ought to be employ'd in providing for his Family, then they have *the appearance of Evil*, and muſt be avoided.

2. When an indifferent Action is liable to be miſtaken, and my Neighbour may hereby be induc'd to do an Action which is utterly unlawful, then I ought to abſtain from it. Thus it was the Cuſtom of the Primitive Chriſtians, to go daily to the Tombs and Monuments of the Martyrs, and to pray by them, that by the remembrance of their holy Lives, and patient and courageous Deaths, their Zeal might be kindled, their Devotions render'd more fervent, and that they might take up more ſtedfaſt Reſolutions of following their Examples: But when from Praying at the Martyrs Tombs, they began firſt to commemorate them in their Prayers, and then to pray to them, and at

laſt to make Mediators and Interceſſors of them; when this indifferent and at firſt Praiſe-worthy Cuſtom was thus groſly abus'd, then it was high time for every good Chriſtian to refrain from it.

3. When my doing an indifferent Action, may induce my Neighbour (who is not ſatisfy'd in the Lawfulneſs of it) to do the ſame Action, then I ought to *abſtain* from it. This was that famous Caſe of the *Romans*, who being but newly initiated into the Chriſtian Religion, and therefore not fully inſtructed in the Extent and Latitude of their Goſpel Liberty, thought it unlawful to eat Meats ſacrific'd to Idols, and therefore St. *Paul* commands that they *ſhould give them no offence*, which *Beza* Interprets, *Ne quidpiam ab quod poſſint impingere*, &c. (*i. e.*) that thoſe who thought it lawful to eat theſe Meats, ſhould not tempt thoſe Perſons to partake of them, who were of another Opinion; but rather to endeavour to ſatisfie them of the Lawfulneſs of it, and to bear with them, and give them no occaſion of Offence till they were better inform'd.

2 Cor. 6. 3.

Laſtly, We ought to govern our ſelves after ſuch a manner in all our indifferent Actions, that we may recommend our ſelves to the good Opinion of our Neighbour, and endeavour hereby to gain an Intereſt

Intereſt in his Affections, that we may be enabled to do him more good, and to promote the Glory of God in the world. And therefore if we foreſee, that by any indifferent Action we ſhall forfeit his good Opinion, or that our indifferent Action is liable to his raſh Judgment, uncharitable Cenſures, and will give him occaſion to harbour Malice, and Ill-will in his Mind, then 'tis our Duty rather to retrench our ſelves in our lawful Liberty, than to be the occaſion of ſo much miſchief to our Brother; or to exclude our ſelves from the bleſſed Opportunities of doing him good; for 'tis the Apoſtles Advice, *That we ſhould not only think on thoſe things which are juſt and honeſt; but whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe things.* Phil. 4. 8.

But here I ſhall interpoſe one Caution, that in all theſe Caſes 'tis ſuppos'd, that the Action ſtill remains indifferent: For thoſe Actions which are in their own Nature indifferent, may become neceſſary by ſome Circumſtance limiting and bounding them; and if my indifferent Action, is annex'd to a neceſſary Duty, or determin'd by a lawful Authority, I am no longer at Liberty which way to Act, nor will an appearance of Evil be a ſufficient Excuſe, for my

my abſtaining from it. Theſe are ſome of thoſe Rules which the beſt Caſuiſts have laid down, but yet they will not reach to all particular Caſes, and where they fall ſhort, our Chriſtian Prudence will be the beſt Guide and Director, hereby following the Example of the Apoſtles of our Saviour Chriſt, who did not live themſelves up to any particular Rule, but in indifferent Matters, ſuited their Actions to the Exigences of things, and comported themſelves ſo, as that they might beſt promote the Glory of God, the good of the Church. If therefore we have to deal with ſuch, as having had leiſure, and parts, and Opportunity to examine things, may reaſonably be thought to diſſent from us, out of Intereſt and Deſign, and are ſo unjuſt as to deny us, that Freedom which they themſelves enjoy; my Advice is *to ſtand faſt in*
Gal. 5. 1. *that Liberty with which Chriſt has made us free*, leaſt by any mean and undue Compliances we ſhould confirm the Erroneous, ſhake the Faithful, encourage the Adverſary, and diſturb the Peace of the Government, both in Church and State, which is ſetled amongſt us: But *of others*
Jud. 22. *let us have Compaſſion, making a difference*; thoſe who are indeed weak in the Faith, and for want of a due Information are ſcrupulous in the leſſer matters of Religion; let

let us inſtruct them in the Extent of their Chriſtian Liberty, and the Lawfulneſs of thoſe indifferent things, they are offended at; let us be careful that we do not give them juſt occaſion of offence, or diſguſt them either by our Words or Actions; but endeavour to win them over by all the lawful Arts and Endearments of Kindneſs and Condeſcention: And if we muſt ſtill differ in ſmaller Matters, let *us love as Brethren*: If we cannot be of one Mind and of one Opinion, *Yet let us be all of one Heart and of one Soul.* Amen and Amen.

SER-

SERMON VII.

ECCLES. V. 1.

Keep thy foot when thou goeſt into the Houſe of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the Sacrifice of Fools: for they conſider not that they do Evil.

THE Deſign of the Royal Preacher in theſe Words, is to perſwade his Hearers, to approach with humble Reverence, both of Body and Soul, into God's immediate Preſence, and to behave themſelves during the time of Publick Worſhip with a becoming Decency and Devotion; to come into his Houſe with Souls affected with awful and reverential Apprehenſions of his Divine Majeſty, with open Ears and obedient Hearts, diſpoſed to do whatſoever he commands them. *Keep thy foot* (ſays the Wiſe Man) *when thou goeſt into the Houſe of God.* (*i. e.*) Prepare and

and fit thy ſelf to partake of theſe holy Ordinances, compoſe thy Mind and thy Body to a Behaviour ſuitable to the Dignity of thoſe Duties thou art about, and the weight and importance of them. The Expreſſion is a plain Alluſion to the Cuſtom of the Eaſtern Countries, of plucking off their Shooes when they made any Profeſſion of ſolemn Reſpect, or trod on Conſecrated Ground, and of waſhing their Feet before they entred the Palaces of their Kings, or the Places dedicated to God's Publick Worſhip. Of theſe Cuſtoms we have ſeveral Inſtances in the holy Scriptures, when God appeared unto *Moſes* in the Buſh, he commanded him *to put his ſhooes from off his feet, becauſe the place whereon he ſtood was holy ground.* Exod. 3. 5. *And the Captain of the Hoſt ſaid unto Joſhua, looſe the ſhooe from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou ſtandeſt is holy.* Joſh. 5. 15. Looſing or plucking off the Shooe was a Ceremony of the ſame import, with uncovering the Head amongſt us, a Token of Reſpect and Reverence: And therefore they waſh'd and made clean their Feet when they went into Publick Aſſemblies: So that *Keeping the feet* is a very proper Expreſſion to denote that Reſpect and Veneration, that Humility of Mind, which is a requiſite Qualification for every devout Worſhipper,

ſhipper, who enters into the Houſe of God, and that Reverent demeanor of himſelf whilſt he is there. *Keep thy feet when thou goeſt into the Houſe of God*, or (as the Original may be rendred) *when thou comeſt into the Houſe of God*, which denotes to us, both how we ought to Prepare our ſelves before we come to the place of God's Publick Worſhip, and how we muſt comport and demean our ſelves when we are there: And therefore 'tis preſently added, *And be more ready to hear, than to give the ſacrifice of fools*; (*i.e.*) be ſure to bring an attentive Ear, and an obedient Heart along with thee, with which God will be better pleas'd, than with thoſe Sacrifices whereby wicked Men think (tho' very fooliſhly) to appeaſe the Anger of God, and to render him favourable and propitious to them, tho' they lead their Lives and Converſations never ſo contrary to his Laws: *for they conſider not that they do Evil*, they do not conſider that God has openly declar'd, That he hates and abhors the Sacrifices of ſuch Men, who offer them up with unclean hands, and an impure heart; ſuch as thoſe who think that their Attendance upon the publick Offices of Religion, will atone and make amends for the wickedneſs and immorality of their Lives: This being

ing the plain meaning of the words, I propoſe to make ſome Enlargement upon them, under theſe following Heads.

I. I ſhall conſider how we ought to *Prepare* our ſelves before we joyn in the Publick Worſhip of God.

II. How we ought to demean our ſelves whilſt we are Worſhipping him.

III. What is to be done after the performance of the publick Duties of Religion.

1. How we ought to *Prepare* our ſelves before we joyn with the Congregation, in the Publick Worſhip of God.

For our Edifying and receiving benefit by the Publick Duties of Religion, in a great meaſure depends on a due *Preparation* for them, 'tis to no Purpoſe *to ſow the good ſeed of the Word*, unleſs our Hearts are manur'd and cultivated, *Prepar'd* and diſpos'd to receive it. Our Prayers will be turn'd into Sin, *if whilſt we ſpeak to God with our lips, our hearts are far from him*, nor will our receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be of any uſe to us; if whilſt we are partaking of the Holy Elements, we cheriſh and harbour ſinful, and impure Thoughts. And here it may be ſeaſonable to take notice of a Iſay 29. 13.

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dangerous Miſtake, which many of the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity are guilty of: They pretend to have a deep and ſerious Senſe, what a weighty and ſolemn Duty the receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is, and 'tis for this Reaſon that they forbear it, becauſe they think they are not *ſufficiently prepared* for it; and yet at the ſame time theſe very Men preſume to come to the Church, to addreſs themſelves unto God's Throne, and hear his Holy Word without any *Preparation* at all, as if the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was the only Duty of Religion, which required Care in the performance of it. Thus they are too nice and ſcrupulous on the one hand, whilſt they are too negligent and prophane on the other; they wholly omit one Ordinance of God, becauſe they do not think themſelves *ſufficiently prepared* for it, and loſe the benefit of all the reſt, becauſe they will not *Prepare* themſelves at all. For what other Reaſon can be given, why Men who live ſo long under the moſt powerful Preaching of the Word of God, Edifie ſo little by it, why their Underſtandings are ſo little improv'd in Spiritual Matters, and their Lives and Converſations ſo little better'd thereby; but becauſe they do not bring *prepared Minds*, and good Diſpoſi-

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tions along with them; their Thoughts are taken up with worldly Affairs, their Hearts are fill'd with corrupt Affections, and many wicked and impure Spirits have taken Poſſeſſion of their Souls, and then no wonder, that the Holy Spirit of God doth not take up his abode with them, when they are not in a Capacity to give him any ſuitable Entertainment.

Some *Preparation* therefore is abſolutely neceſſary to be made before we attend on the Publick Worſhip of God: Which may be perform'd after this or ſuch like manner.

Upon the Lord's Day, or any other day Dedicated to the Publick Service of God, and ſet apart from our private Employments, to the more ſolemn Worſhip of our Creator, as ſoon as ever we awake, let our Souls be ſeaſon'd with ſome holy and devout Meditation. Let us conſider, that at the ſame time the Sun ſalutes our Eyes, and refreſheth our Bodies with his comfortable Beams, *The ſun of Righteouſneſs doth ariſe with healing in his wings*, and makes us the Overtures of ſome peculiar Favours: That this Day is ſet apart by the great God of Heaven and Earth, to receive the Homage of his Vaſſals, and to give them the Liberty of entring his Courts, appearing before his Throne, admiring Mal. 4. 2.

miring his Excellencies, adoring his Perfections, celebrating his Praiſes, and laying open their Wants before him, and begging Supplies; and that therefore 'tis both our Duty and Intereſt to improve theſe Seaſons of Grace, to *Prepare our ſelves to meet our God*, and not only to put our Bodies into a Decent and becoming Dreſs, but to adorn our Souls with ſuch Qualifications and Diſpoſitions, as are requiſite for Poor, ſinful Men, when they appear before the great Creator and Governour of the World. And becauſe the *Preparations of the heart are from the* Prov. 16. 1. *Lord*; it will be neceſſary to proſtrate our ſelves before the Throne of his Grace, and to beſeech God, *Who is the Author* Jam. 1. 17. *and Giver of every good and perfect Gift*, that he will inſpire our Hearts with holy Diſpoſitions, and afford us the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to caſt out of our Minds, all vain and worldly Thoughts, to ſubdue all Carnal and corrupt Affections, and to offer up to him our Bodies and Souls, a pure, undefiled, and acceptable Sacrifice: That we may ſpend this day (eſpecially that part of it, which i ›edicated to God's immediate Service) ter ſo Holy and Devout a manner, as may promote our Spiritual Welfare, and hereby *Glorifie our Father which*

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ü in Heaven. Let us beſeech Almighty God, that his good Spirit may go along with us through all the Duties of the day, and incite, ſtrengthen, and confirm us in every good Work: That he would teach us to Pray with Fervency, and an holy Aſſurance that all our Requeſts (which are conformable to the Will of God) ſhall be granted us; to hear his Word with Attention, and firm Reſolutions of performing whatſoever we are convinc'd is our Duty; and to Praiſe him with gladneſs and cheerfulneſs of Soul, with Hearts fill'd with the grateful Reſentments of his Benefits, and Loving kindneſs towards us. Matth. 5. 16.

In the next place let us read ſome Portion of the Holy Scripture, and make this the Subject of our Meditation; till the hour approaches when we are call'd upon to joyn with the Congregation in our Devotions, and we hear the Summons to attend God's Publick Worſhip. It will then be time to enter upon a more particular Conſideration, how we have paſs'd the laſt Week, how well we have perform'd thoſe Reſolutions which we have formerly taken up, what Sins we have ſince been guilty of, what good Duties we have omitted, and that we ſhould be ſorry for theſe our Neglects, and bewail our

Miſ-carriages, and reſolve that we will amend our Lives, and never be guilty of the ſame Sins for the time to come; but that we will walk more uprightly, and more exactly, in Obedience to all the Commands of God.

This is that *Preparation* of Soul, which every one ought to make before he enters into the Houſe of God. For God will not be ſerv'd with unclean hands, and an unſanctify'd heart; he abhors even the moſt *ſolemn Faſts of thoſe Men, who ſmite with the Fiſts of wickedneſs; he expects that the ſprinkling water ſhould be ſprinkled upon us, and that we ſhould cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, when we draw near unto him, And waſh our hands in innocency, before we compaſs God's Altar.* Let us therefore never omit this Examination of our ſelves before we enter into God's Houſe, when we have time and opportunity ſo to do: For tho' upon ſome ſudden Emergencies, all this Precaution is not to be us'd, this Exactneſs of *Preparation* may be omitted, and a general and habitual *Preparation* of Mind will ſuffice; yet this will in no wiſe excuſe the conſtant Neglect of this Duty, nor take off the blame from thoſe Men, who live in the conſtant Omiſſion of it; for 'tis highly reaſonable to believe that

Iſa. 58. 4.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

Pſal. 26. 6.

Self-

Self-Examination is a Duty in ſome Degree as abſolutely neceſſary to be perform'd before we attend God's Publick Worſhip; as 'tis before the receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: Which Sacrament was anciently an Eſſential part of the Publick Worſhip of God, tho' of late years it has been ſcandalouſly neglected. And therefore as when Men come to the Table of the Lord without due *Preparation*, they *trample under feet Chriſt's holy Body and Blood, and eat and drink Condemnation to themſelves*: So when they frequent the Houſe of God, and attend upon his Ordinances careleſly and negligently, they grieve God's Holy Spirit, provoke him to leave and forſake them, to give them up to hardneſs of Heart, and a reprobate Mind; *Foraſmuch as this People* (Says the Prophet) *draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have remov'd their heart far from me, therefore behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work, and a wonder; for the Wiſdom of their wiſe Men ſhall periſh, and the underſtanding of their prudent Men ſhall be hid.* God doth not now always puniſh Prophaneneſs and Coldneſs in our Devotions, with temporal Evils, and ſickneſs in the Body, as formerly in the Primitive Church: But he

1 Cor. 11. 29.

Iſa. 29. 13, 14.

has exchang'd them for ſuch as are far more dreadful, ſuch as endanger the Soul, and take away the ſpiritual Life of a Chriſtian. Every unſanctify'd approach which we make unto him, renders us more cold and indifferent in our Devotions, till at laſt it leads us by degrees into open Prophaneneſs and Atheiſm. Let therefore every one who deſires to receive the bleſſed Influences of God's holy Spirit, and that his Soul may be a Temple fitted and prepared for him to dwell in; Let him I ſay, firſt cleanſe his Heart by a due and ſtrict Examination of himſelf, and a ſerious and hearty Repentance for the Errors of his ways; Let him thus *keep his feet before he goes into the Houſe of God* (*i. e.*) obſerve what Paths he has walked in, how the Affections of his Soul are fitted, and diſpos'd to partake of theſe holy Ordinances.

Laſtly, Whilſt we are going towards the Houſe of God, let us entertain our ſelves with ſuch Meditations as theſe. Let us conſider the Glorious Majeſty of that God before whom we are going to appear, that he is the great Creator, Preſerver, and Governour of the World, who humbles himſelf to look down upon the Sons of Men, being exalted above all Praiſe,

Praiſe, and exceedingly Happy and Glorious, above all that we can conceive and think: 'Tis this God who grants us Audience, and vouchſafes us the Favour of making our Addreſſes unto him: Let us conſider alſo our own Vileneſs and Sinfulneſs, how unworthy we are of ſo great Favours, and hereby raiſe up in our Souls, that humble Awe and devout Reverence of the Supream Being, which is requir'd of every one who Worſhips God. Thus the devout *Cornelius* tells *Peter*, That he and all the reſt *were preſent before God, to hear all things which were commanded them by God*, (*i. e.*) they had conſidered with themſelves, who it was that was to ſpeak to them, and that the words they were to hear, were not the words of *Peter*, a frail ſinful Man like themſelves, but the words of God. Thus before we preſent our Petitions unto God, we are commanded to *conſider that God is in Heaven, and we on Earth*; (*i. e.*) that there is an infinite Diſtance between the Creator and his poor Creature; that he is the moſt Perfect, the moſt Glorious, and the moſt Holy Being, but we only duſt and aſhes, vile Earth and miſerable Sinners; vile we are in our own Nature, but we have made our ſelves much more ſo, by our manifold Sins, and repeated Tranſgreſſions. When therefore we

Levit. 26. 2.

Acts 10. 23.

approach the Holy Temple of the Lord, Let us ſay thus within our ſelves; *How dreadful is this place, this is certainly the place where the Lord dwells*? I am now going to the Houſe of God, to appear before the Lord Almighty, who has my Soul in his hand, and the breath of my Noſtrils at his diſpoſal, *in whom I live, and move, and have my Being*; I am drawing near to the King of Heaven and Earth, to preſent my ſelf before his Face, to pay him my Homage, and to make him the Tenders of my bounden Duty and Service: Let me therefore put my Mind into ſuch a devout Frame, as he will accept of, and take Care that I behave my ſelf with Reverence, Decency, and Devotion. And now having brought you to the Temple. I proceed to ſhew,

Gen. 28. 17.

2. How we ought to demean our ſelves when we enter into the Houſe of God, and whilſt we are performing the Duties of Religion. And here I am to conſider, 1. The Frame and Diſpoſition of our Souls. 2. The Geſture of our Bodies. *God is a Spirit and will be worſhipped in Spirit and in Truth*, (*i. e.*) requires principally, and in the firſt place the Worſhip of our Souls, and then that of our Bodies.

Joh. 4. 24.

Now to a due worſhipping God with our Souls, there are requir'd theſe three things. I. At-

I. Attention of our Minds to the Duty we are about.

II. The Intention and Ardency of the Affections.

III. The Conſent of our Wills, and their Conformity to the Divine Will and Pleaſure.

1. If we would offer up unto God an acceptable Service, our Minds muſt be attentive to the Duty we are about; whilſt we are praying to God for thoſe Bleſſings we ſtand in need of, or praiſing him for thoſe we have received, we muſt either be meditating on the God we Worſhip, or, the thing we deſire or praiſe him for: For ſince Worſhip is the Acknowledgment of thoſe Excellencies and Perfections which are in the Divine Nature, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould have any ſerious Senſe, or make any due Acknowledgment of theſe Perfections, unleſs we keep our Minds intent upon them: We may as well commend the beauty of an Object we never ſaw, and be taken with that Muſick we never heard, as admire and acknowledge thoſe Excellencies we never thought on or conſider'd. For to ſerve God with our Mouths, when our Thoughts are wandring ſome where elſe, and employ'd about ſome other Buſineſs, is but Lip-Worſhip at the beſt;

beſt; a Sacrifice without an heart, which God will utterly deteſt and abhor. 'Tis therefore one of the principal *Devices of the Devil, of which we ought not to be ignorant,* to excite and ſtir up vain Thoughts in our Minds, during the time of Divine Worſhip, to divert them upon worldly and ſinful Objects, and hereby to deprive us of that Benefit we might otherwiſe obtain, by a due and conſcientious performance of theſe Duties. And therefore it ought to be the Care of all good Chriſtians to ſtand continually upon their Guard, to bear a ſtrict Eye over their Hearts, and as ſoon as ever they find any vain and ſinful Thoughts ſpring up in their Minds, to caſt them out: To reſtrain and bring back their wandering Thoughts, and never to make them their own by conſenting to them, or dwelling upon them. Some Men are more addicted to roving and volatile Thoughts than others are, from their natural Temper and Conſtitution, and therefore are not ſo blameable for that which they cannot help: But 'tis then only they are faulty, when their Will cloſes with them, when they do not make Uſe of the moſt proper means to prevent them, (*i. e.*) A due and conſcientious *Preparation* of their Hearts for Religious Duties; then do they corrupt

2 Cor. 2. 11.

rupt their moſt Holy Offerings, and *turn the Sacrifices of their Prayers and Thankſgivings into ſin.* Let it therefore be our firſt and principal Care to fix our thoughts, and keep them attentive to the Duties we are about, and we ſhall ſoon find that he who has thus well begun, has half finiſhed his work: If we can but once bring our ſelves to be ſerious and attentive, to apply our Minds to the Worſhip of God, this will naturally produce

2. The Intention and Ardency of our Affections: For the Duties of Religion are in themſelves ſo *reaſonable a Service*, ſo excellently fitted to bring about thoſe Ends for which they were appointed, and ſo agreeable to the Faculties of our Soul; that there is requir'd little more to recommend them to our liking and delight, than a ſober and ſerious Application of our Minds, and a daily and conſtant accuſtoming our ſelves to them. It will be tedious and irkſome to us at the firſt, to ſpend our time in Religious Duties, to pray and hear God's word, and meditate upon it; but when we have once got the Victory over our corrupt and ſtubborn Natures, by a daily Practice of theſe Duties; nothing will yield us ſo much Pleaſure and Delight on this ſide Heaven, as the pouring out our Prayers before God, the laying Rom. 12. 1.

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ing open our Wants, and begging Supplies, the magnifying his Name for Benefits beſtow'd upon us, and communicating to others the grateful Reſentments of our Souls. Theſe are the Employments of Saints and Angels above, and will create a kind of Heaven in every good Man's breaſt, whoſe Mind is taken up with ſuch glorious Conceptions, and joyful Reſentments as theſe. *Theſe* (as *David* tells us) *are ſweeter than the honey and the honey comb.* Which made him chuſe rather, *to ſpend one day in God's Courts, than a thouſand elſe-where. Let us therefore Worſhip the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our ſoul.* Let us embrace his Truth with our Underſtandings, treaſure it up in our Memories, and careſs it with our Affections. Let us pray unto him with Faith, Zeal, and Fervency; and praiſe him with a due Admiration of his Goodneſs, and grateful Reſentments of his Mercy and Loving-kindneſs; and then nothing will remain but that,

Pſal. 19. 10.

Pſal. 84. 10.

3. We cloſe with it by our Wills, and conform them to his Divine Will and Pleaſure. That we reſolve to amend our Lives in every particular wherein we have done amiſs, and to yield a ſincere Obedience to the Laws of God, in every known Inſtance of our Duty; that we may

may not perform our Devotions, only that we may be thought to be Religious, but that we may be really ſo; and not only be wiſer Men, but better Chriſtians. For the end of all the Devotional parts of Religion is chiefly to lead us unto Practice; they are enjoyn'd us as helps and means to aſſiſt us, *To direct our Converſations aright*, and that hereby we may be the better enabled to live up to the Rules of Reaſon and Religion. Do but take any particular Duty into your Conſideration, and you will find, that it has a neceſſary influence upon our Lives, and a direct Tendency to aſſiſt us, in a due performance of our Duty. For Inſtance, would it not be abſurd to imagine, that God has commanded us to Repent of our Sins, becauſe he takes delight in the Sighs and Tears of the Penitent Sinner? For he who is a Being of infinite Goodneſs, is never better pleas'd, than when he is doing us good, and communicating his Bleſſings unto us: But the Reaſon why he commands us to Repent, is that he may make us ſenſible of the Evil Nature of our Sins, and the Miſery and Ruin which our Vices betray us into; and that hereby we may be deterr'd from thoſe Actions, which are ſo diſhonourable to God, and ſo prejudicial to our ſelves: Nor would it be more

more reaſonable to Fancy, that our Prayers and Praiſes make any addition to his Glory, or increaſe his Happineſs. for he is infinitely, and therefore perfectly happy in the Enjoyment of himſelf; but theſe Duties are enjoyn'd us, that by the performance of them, our Souls may be more ſeriouſly affected with a humble Senſe of our own weakneſs, and a grateful Reſentment of God's Goodneſs, whereby we may be inclin'd to yield the readier Obedience to his Commands, and be drawn by *theſe cords of a man* to obey his Laws. I might inſtance in all the other Duties of inſtituted Religion, but from what I have already ſaid it plainly appears, That all the parts of Publick Worſhip do directly tend to make Men more Holy in this Life, in order to make them more Happy in that which is to come; and that then it doth obtain the End for which it was appointed, when we take up Reſolutions of living better, and of conforming our Wills to the Divine Will and Pleaſure.

Hoſea 11. 4.

Thus I have ſhew'd what that Worſhip of our Souls is, which God requires of us; that it conſiſts in the Attention of our Thoughts, the Intention of our Minds, and the Harmony of our Wills with God's Divine Will. I come to conſider,

2. How

2. How we ought to Worſhip God with our Bodies. For ſince our Bodies, as well as our Souls were the Workmanſhip of his hands, 'tis but highly reaſonable we ſhould pay him the Homage of them, *and ſerve him alſo with our Bodies which are his.* That we ſhould diſpoſe our ſelves during the time of Divine Worſhip to ſuch Decent, becoming, and reverential Geſtures, that we may make it evident to all Men, that our whole Man is dedicated to his Service. And this will be beſt perform'd by bearing in mind this general Rule, *That we put on that Gravity, and ſeriouſneſs of Looks and Behaviour, and deport our ſelves after ſuch a manner, as the belief of God's immediate Preſence, and the ſolemnity of his Worſhip requires from us.*

For though Irreverence, and Indecency in the Publick Worſhip of God, is by too many eſteem'd a light and trivial Offence, and hardly worth taking notice of; which proceeds from this falſe Notion, they are prepoſſeſſed with; That if they ſerve God with their Minds and Spirits, 'tis no matter what their bodily Behaviour is: Yet this will be found to be a groſs Miſtake, and of dangerous and pernicious Conſequence, if weigh'd in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and of unprejudic'd Reaſon; for,

1. Why

1. Why ſhould we believe thoſe Men will Worſhip God with their Souls and Spirits, who will not Worſhip him with their Bodies? If they will not do ſo eaſie a thing, as to comport their ſelves decently and affectionately, during the time of Divine Service, 'tis not probable that they ſhould perform, that which is far more difficult, to Worſhip him with Intention of Soul, and Ardency of Affection. It requires their utmoſt Diligence and Application, to keep their Minds attentive, and to go along with the Congregation in all the parts of Publick Worſhip, which theſe Men will never take the Pains to perform, who both by their Looks and Geſtures declare, That their Minds are in ſome other place, and employ'd on ſome other Buſineſs. A multitude of needleſs and inſignificant Ceremonies, ſuch as are enjoyn'd in the Church of *Rome*, tend to divert our Minds from the buſineſs we are about, and make ſo much imployment for our Bodies, that 'twould be very difficult to ſerve him with our Souls: But this cannot be laid to the Charge of our Religious Worſhip, nor do I plead for them; 'tis only a devout and reverential Deportment of our ſelves I would inforce, a behaving our ſelves with that Decency and Uniformity our Church preſcribes, that Gravi-

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ty and Seriousness, that humble Prostration of our Bodies and Souls, which becomes Men who are in the immediate Presence of the great God of Heaven and Earth. That this is our Duty will appear,

2. From the Nature of Divine Worship, which (as I have formerly observ'd) consists in that Awe and Reverence which Men have for the Divine Majesty, and the Sense of that infinite distance which is between the Creator and his poor Creatures, who continually depend upon him for every thing they enjoy; which makes them approach his Presence with Humility of Mind, and a profound Adoration of his infinite Perfections, and will discover it self in their Looks, Words, and Actions: For there is so close an Union between our Souls and Bodies, that when the one is seriously affected, the other cannot remain unconcern'd; when our Minds are fill'd with glorious Ideas of God's wonderful Perfections, his Majesty, Power, Goodness, and Loving-kindness towards us; we may as well think *to carry Fire in our Bosoms, and not be burn'd*, as to contain our selves from discovering the Sentiments of our Minds, by visible Demonstrations. Prov. 6. 27.

Beſides 'tis Eſſential to Publick Worſhip, that we make known the Thoughts of our Souls, by Publick Tokens of Reverence and Signs of Honour; this being one chief end of our Worſhipping God in Publick, that *we may with one mind, and one mouth glorifie God*, and incite and ſtir up one another, to praiſe and adore him, and declare to the whole World, what a Reverence we retain for his infinite Perfections; which can no other ways be done, but by our external Behaviour, and devout Deportment of our ſelves. And therefore 'tis worth our Obſervation, *That there never was any man deſervedly eminent for Piety and Devotion, who did not joyn Bodily Worſhip with his mental Adorations.* I ſhall only add a third Conſideration.

Rom. 15. 6.

3. That God and his holy Angels are preſent in our Congregations, and therefore we ought to be more careful, that we behave our ſelves Decently, and carry our ſelves with Humility and Reſpect (uncovering our Heads, and bending our Bodies, and giving all the Signs of Attention and readineſs to yield Obedience to his Commands) than we would be in the Preſence of a temporal Prince. Did God appear in our Churches in a viſible manner, as formerly he did in the Congregation of the *Jews*, there is no queſtion but that

that the Dread of his glorious Majeſty, would put every one of us into the moſt humble and devout Poſtures; *yet God is here preſent of a truth though we know it not*; God and his holy Angels do not only look down and behold us, but are as certainly preſent in this Congregation, as if we beheld them with our Bodily Eyes. Let us therefore proſtrate our ſelves before God, *And kneel before the Lord our Maker*; let us give him the Worſhip of our Souls, and of our Bodies, *And praiſe him in the Congregation of his Saints, and bow down our ſelves before him.* Pſal. 95. 6.

3. I come to conſider in the laſt place, what is to be done after the performance of the Publick Duties of Religion. And here that the good Seed of the Word may take deep root in our Hearts; let us not give up our Minds to our ſecular Affairs, and worldly Thoughts, as ſoon as ever Divine Service is ended, much leſs ſhould we let looſe our Thoughts to Paſtimes and Recreations, though never ſo innocent and harmleſs; for were there no Divine Command, common Prudence would dictate to us, that the beſt way to fix thoſe Truths we have heard upon our Memories, is to take ſome time to recollect our ſelves, and to digeſt what we have heard by ſerious Meditation; and that in all

Probability the diverting our Thoughts to other Employments, will deface all thoſe good Impreſſions the word of God has made on our Minds, blot them out of our Memories, and make thoſe Truths which have been deliver'd *like the Seed ſown by the way ſide*, which becomes a prey to the Fowls of the Air. Let us therefore ſpend ſome time in recollecting what the Preacher has deliver'd to us, in conſidering what Article of Religion has been explain'd, what Vertue has been recommended, what Vice reprov'd, what Arguments and Motives have been us'd, and in ſhort, in comparing the Doctrine deliver'd with the written word of God; and if we find it agreeable to it, then let us treaſure it up in our Minds, and tranſcribe it into our Lives. Let this be the chief end of hearing God's Word, that we may yield a more exact Obedience to his Commands, and *grow wiſe unto Salvation.*

Matth. 13. 5.

2 Tim. 3. 15.

To this End, let us conclude all with our affectionate and fervent Prayers to God, that he would be pleas'd to inlighten our Underſtandings, open our Hearts, and incline our Wills, and to render his good Word effectual to the accompliſhment of thoſe Ends for which it was deſign'd, that we may not be only bare

hearers

hearers of the Word, but doers of the ſame. Let us praiſe and magnifie his Name, for the many gracious Opportunities he has given us of entring his Courts, and approaching his Sanctuary, that we have the Liberty of Worſhipping him in Publick, and enjoy the glorious Light of his Goſpel, whilſt ſo great part of the World ſit *in darkneſs and the ſhadow of Death.* And let us not only content our ſelves with making a verbal Acknowledgment of theſe Favours; but teſtifie our Thankfulneſs by a conſtant Attendance on his Worſhip and Word, and making it the ſtanding Rule for the Government of our Lives and Converſations.

Pſal. 107. 10.

SERMON VIII.

2 COR. XII. 9.

And he ſaid unto me, my Grace is ſufficient for thee.

WONDERFUL good and Gracious are the Deſigns of Providence towards Mankind, both as to this World and the next, and the end of all God's Diſpenſations in this Life, is ſo to exerciſe their Graces, to implant in them ſuch vertuous Diſpoſitions and Habits, that they may be capable of the Enjoyment of that infinite and eternal Happineſs, which he has prepared for them hereafter. And therefore 'twas excellent Advice, tho' from the mouth of an Heathen.

——— *Si vis conſilium*
Permittes ipſis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebuſque ſit utile noſtris:
Nam pro jucundis, aptiſſima quæq; dabunt dii,
Charior eſt illis homo, quam ſibi ———

Which is as much as to ſay, Commit

mit thy ſelf, and all thy Concerns to Divine Providence, let him determine what is moſt convenient for thee, what is moſt requiſite in the Courſe of thy Affairs; for God loves Man, better than Man loves himſelf, and doth him good oftentimes againſt his Will, and though he denies him thoſe things which are grateful and acceptable to his fleſhly Appetites and Deſires, to his carnal Luſts, and inordinate Paſſions, yet he gives him other Bleſſings which are more wholſome, and more profitable to him. Thus a careful Phyſician preſcribes ſafe and beneficial, though unpalatable Medicines to his diſeas'd Patient; and thus God deals with Mankind, mercifully and bountifully, and frequently denies his Requeſts and Prayers out of Kindneſs to him, that he may furniſh him with thoſe things which are more ſafe, and more convenient for him. This is an uſeful Leſſon, and to be learn'd from St. *Paul*'s Experience, as 'tis contain'd in the Text, and the two preceding Verſes. *Leaſt* (ſays he) *I ſhould be exalted above meaſure, through the abundance of Revelation, there was given unto me a thorn in the Fleſh, the Meſſenger of Satan to buffet me, leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure. For this thing I beſought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from*

me, And he ſaid unto me, my Grace is ſufficient for thee: So that the words of the Text are an Anſwer to St. *Paul*'s Prayer, wherein God inſtead of delivering him from the buffeting of Satan, which was the thing he pray'd for, Promiſes to give him his Grace to endure it, which would be far more commodious and advantageous to him. *My Grace is ſufficient for thee.* That I may Diſcourſe with the greater Profit upon theſe words: I ſhall conſider,

I. What it is which God Promiſes. *His Grace.*

II. The meaſure and proportion of it. *Such as ſhould be ſufficient.*

III. The Perſon to whom it was promis'd, to the Apoſtle St. *Paul. My Grace is ſufficient for thee.*

As if God ſhould have ſaid thus unto him; I will not anſwer thy Requeſts, in exempting thee from thy manifold Troubles and Afflictions; but leaſt thou ſhouldeſt be oppreſt by them, I will give thee what is more expedient for thee, to wit, *my Grace which is ſufficient for thee.*

1. What it is which God Promiſes, *viz. his Grace:* Which taken in the general, denotes the Power and Efficacy of the Holy Spirit, renewing the Soul to the Image of

of God, and continually ſtrengthning, and guiding it in Obedience to his Will. Now from the ſame Spirit proceeds Diverſity of Grace; there is *Gratia gratis data*, or the miraculous Unction of the Holy Ghoſt, whereby to one is given the Gift of Miracles, to another ſpeaking with Tongues, to a third Prophecying; but this is not the *Grace* meant in the Text, for this was communicated to wicked, as well as to good Men, to *Balaam* and *Saul*, and *Caiphas* and *Judas*, as well as to the reſt of the Apoſtles; this was the occaſion of tempting St. *Paul* to the Sin of Pride, of which he ſpeaks in the Verſes before the Text. And thoſe excellent Gifts and Endowments with which this Apoſtle was furniſh'd, tended to puff him up, and expos'd him to the Buffettings and Temptations of the Devil: But that Grace which upheld and ſtrengthned him, and *was ſufficient for him*; was what the School-men call *Gratia gratum faciens*; or the Grace of Life. Such as are all the ſaving Gifts and Graces of the Spirit, which are wrought by his Help and Aſſiſtance in the hearts of Believers, ſuch as Faith, Hope, Charity, Purity, Humility, and all other gracious Habits of the Mind, which the Apoſtle calls *the fruit of the Spirit*, and wherein the Image of God, the

1 Cor. 12. 12.

the Power of Godlineſs, and the Spirit of Chriſtianity do truly conſiſt. This is that Grace which *renders us acceptable unto God*, and is in effect *eternal Life unto us.* This is that Grace which is beſt deſcrib'd by its Effects, *Which illuminates our Underſtandings, teaches us thoſe things we know not, and brings us to the Knowledge of the Truth*; this renews the Image of God in our Souls, governs our perverſe Wills and Affections, Counſels and Actions, God's holy Spirit leading, guiding and directing us in all our ways; this unites us unto Chriſt our Head, Comforts us in all our Affliction and Diſtreſs, whether of Body or Soul; and therefore the holy Spirit is call'd *the Comforter*, and *the Oyl of Gladneſs.* And laſtly, It helps us in all our Streights, and Supports us in times of the greateſt Diſtreſs and Extremity; it keeps us from deſpairing of God's Mercy when we conſider our manifold Sins and Tranſgreſſions, or from queſtioning his Providence, becauſe of our Miſeries, and from back-ſliding and falling off from Chriſt for fear of Danger, or any other worldly Reſpects. In ſhort, it enables us *to do all things*, which God requires of us, *through Chriſt that ſtrengthens us.* Which brings me to the

Eph. 1. 6.

Rom. 6. 23.

1 Joh. 2. 27.

Rom. 8. 14.

Joh. 15. 26.

Pſal. 45. 8.

Phil. 4. 13.

2. Ob-

2. Obſervable in the Text. The meaſure and proportion of this Grace; 'tis ſuch as is ſufficient to enable us to undergo whatſoever God ſhall pleaſe to lay upon us. *My Grace is ſufficient for thee:* 1 Theſ. 5. 23. For ſince that God who gives *this Grace*, is in himſelf All-ſufficient, therefore there is no queſtion, but that the Aſſiſtance which he affords, will be ſufficient to bring about thoſe Ends for which he gave it. God's Grace ſanctifies all the Faculties of our Souls, all the Powers of our Body; it is *ſufficient* in every State and Condition of Life, it cheers us in Adverſity, it reſtrains us in Proſperity, not ſuffering us, either to be puft up with the one, or to droop under the Burthen of the other. It is a *ſufficient* Remedy againſt all Temptations, and fortifies our Souls againſt all ſorts of Batteries. When we are afflicted, it tells us, That *our Sufferings here are not worthy to be compar'd with that eternal weight of Glory, which ſhall be reveal'd in us*; or if we abound in Bleſſings, or in Gifts natural, or ſupernatural, it tells us from whence they came, and to what end they were beſtowed upon us, that we muſt not hide theſe Talents in a Napkin, or abuſe the Grace of God unto Wantonneſs, but promote as much as in

Eph. 6. 12. Rom. 8. 18.

us

us lies the Glory of God, the good of our *Neighbour*, and the eternal Welfare of our own Souls. Tho' we offer up our Prayers to God without preſent Returns, or apparent Succeſs, it tells us, That God forbears to give us thoſe good things we ask for, that he may try our Patience and Perſeverance; and ſince he doth not ſee it expedient to grant them, therefore 'tis our Duty to wait the Determination of his good Pleaſure. Again, God's *Grace is ſufficient* for all Perſons; our heavenly Father is ſo merciful, that he ſhines as well upon the bad as the good; *of his fullneſs all receive Grace for Grace.* And tho' the Grace of God is not imparted to all alike, yet every Man receives a *ſufficient* Portion of it, ſufficient to ſupply all his Wants, both Temporal and Spiritual. For as if you dip Veſſels of different Sizes into the Sea, every one will be full of Water, though every one doth not hold the ſame quantity; ſo tho' there are different Gifts, and different Adminiſtrations, and different meaſures of Grace communicated to Men, yet God with-holds from no Man ſufficient Grace, to enable him to be good and vertuous, and to anſwer all his preſſing and unavoidable Neceſſities. The *Iſraelites* in the *Wilderneſs* gathered *Manna*, according to every Man's eating, when

Joh. 1. 16

Exod. 16. 18.

when they did meaſure it with an *Omer*, he that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gather'd little had no lack: So God gives his *Grace* unto Men, according to every Man's neceſſity; meaſure it with an *Omer*, weigh all the Circumſtances and you will find, That neither he that has little has Cauſe to repine, nor he that has much, to boaſt. One Man is ſurrounded with Temptations, burthen'd and loaded even to the ground with Afflictions, oppreſs'd with Difficulties, and to this Man God gives a greater Portion of his holy Spirit, he aſſiſts him more powerfully, he ſtrengthens and confirms him after an extraordinary manner, and enables him to cloſe and grapple with the Difficulty or Temptation which aſſaults him. Another has been nurtur'd in Vice, and brought up in Debauchery, and it is neceſſary, that he ſhould be reclaim'd from his Evil doings, with a ſtrong hand, and an out-ſtretch'd Arm. A third has been long accuſtom'd to good, and is naturally inclin'd to Sobriety and Vertue, and requires only the ordinary Aſſiſtance of God's Grace to keep him ſo. Thus God like a Wiſe Houſholder proportions his Gifts to the Wants, and Neceſſities of his Children and Servants, and will require of every one according to what he has

has receiv'd, and reward them according to their Works; he that has but one Talent given him, if he well employs that one, may obtain *the Government of one City*; though he has not the higheſt place in the Kingdom of Heaven; yet he will find Admittance there, where the leaſt degree of Happineſs, will conſiſt of Joys unſpeakable, which tranſcend all compariſon. But if God call out any one to give Teſtimony to the Truth, or to be an eminent Example of Patience or Long-ſuffering, or taking up the Croſs, he will furniſh him with proportionable meaſures of Strength; ſo that the good Chriſtian may reſt aſſur'd, that though at preſent he finds himſelf weak and frail, and unable to undergo the Affliction, which he fears will ſuddenly fall upon him, yet I ſay he may aſſure himſelf, that the Divine Aſſiſtance will always attend him, God will never leave him, nor forſake him, but as his troubles grow upon him, ſo ſhall he be ſupply'd with more Power, more Courage, and more Ability, to bear up under them.

1 Cor. 10. 13. *God is faithful, and will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear*, as St. *Paul* aſſures us. And that God has been faithful in the performance of this, as well as his other Promiſes, we need no other Teſtimony, but that of our own Conſciences. For if

we

we look back upon the paſt Tranſactions of our Lives we ſhall find, how frequently *God's Grace* has ſuggeſted to us, *This is the Way, walk in it*, when we were in ſuſpence how to behave our ſelves; and has as it were Pointed out our Duty to us; how often we have been *prick'd at the heart*, when we have committed any Sin, and ſtir'd up and incited to do good; and the Reaſon why we have done amiſs, and tranſgreſs'd God's Commands has generally been, becauſe we have not improv'd thoſe good Motions, and followed the Dictates and Impulſes of *God's Grace* within us. For tho' we are not to look for any other Directions, for the Government of our Lives, beſides thoſe of God's written word; and if we have any thing ſuggeſted to us, which is oppoſite to this eſtabliſh'd Rule of our Duty, we ought to look upon it as a ſnare of the Devil, and the Inſtigation of an evil Spirit: Yet on the contrary, when we find any vigorous and ſtrong Inclination to do that, which we are fully aſſur'd is our Duty to do, at that time, and in that place; then we may aſſure our ſelves, that this is the Motion of God's holy Spirit, the Grace of God working in us, and that 'tis our Duty to comply with it, to encourage and improve it; and if we do ſo then, it will

will certainly bring to paſs that Effect, for which God at the firſt deſign'd and intended it. It remains therefore, That *God's Grace is ſufficient for us*, (i. e.) gives us Strength, Ability, and Means enough to ſubdue the Devil, the World, and the Fleſh; and that if we are brought under the Dominion, and Power of any of theſe, we muſt accuſe our own Sloth, and Lazineſs, in neglecting to uſe and improve to the uttermoſt, thoſe means and helps which God has afforded us. This will be made more evident by conſidering,

3. The Perſon to whom this Promiſe is made, *My Grace is ſufficient for thee*: And if we conſider the Perſon here ſpoken of (the Apoſtle St. *Paul*) according to that account which is given of him in the Holy Scripture, we ſhall find in his Life, ſuch variety of Circumſtances, ſo very remarkable and inſtructive, that there is hardly any Condition we can fall into, wherein we may not receive Benefit by his Example, and have an Inſtance of the Powerfulneſs, and *ſufficiency of God's Grace*. Let us conſider him as a *Jew*, how zealous was he in the Profeſſion of that Faith, how furious in the Perſecution of all ſuch, who either taught or liv'd in the Obſervance of the Chriſtian Religion? He was *a Phariſee the Son of a Phariſee*. And by conſe-

Acts 23. 6.

quence

quence a rigid Obſerver, not only of the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law, but alſo of all the Traditions of the *Rabbies*; ſo that though he liv'd at that time, when our Saviour Chriſt was on Earth, and had heard of, if not ſeen, the Miracles which he wrought, yet was he an inveterate Enemy to him and his Religion. And this miſtaken Zeal for the Moſaical Law carried him forth to a furious Perſecution of the Church; he was conſenting to the Death of the Martyr St. *Stephen*, *He made havock of the Church*, and *breathed out nothing but threatnings, and ſlaughter againſt the Diſciples; dragging Men and Women to Priſon*, and procuring Letters of Inquiſition againſt them from the High Prieſt; and yet for all this, *God's Grace was ſufficient to bring him from the bondage of the Law, to the Freedom of the Goſpel, and the only Righteouſneſs in Chriſt Jeſus*; to make him Preach that Faith, which he formerly perſecuted, and from an Enemy, to become a Martyr for the Chriſtian Religion. Conſider him now as a *Chriſtian*, and then you will find him remarkable for the exact Government of his Life, his Graces, his Afflictions, his Infirmities.

Acts 22. 20. Acts. 8. 3. Acts 9. 1.

1. He was remarkable for his auſtere Life and Converſation. Like one who ſtrove for the Maſtery, he abſtain'd from all things

which might hinder him in his Chriſtian
1 Cor. 9. 27. Courſe, *beating down his Body, and bring-*
1 Cor. 15. 10. *ing it into ſubjection, he labour'd more abundantly than all the reſt of the Apoſtles,* travelling from Nation to Nation, from City to City, never wearied with Preaching, never baffled with Oppoſition, never tired with diſputing, and all this thro' the *Grace of God which was ſufficient in him.*

2 If you would take a Survey of his Graces you may read, That *he propheſied, he ſpake with Tongues, he wrought Miracles*; what ſhall I ſay, he was enlightned, ὑπερβολῇ ἀποκαλύψεων, with an abundance, an Exceſs, a multitude of Revelations; *he*
2 Cor. 12. 4. *was caught up into the third Heaven, and heard words which it was not poſſible for Man to utter.* Theſe were ſuch Privileges, ſuch evident Demonſtrations that he was belov'd of God, and a Favourite of Heaven, that nothing could keep him from being puſt up with them, but an extraordinary meaſure of *God's Grace*, with which he was endow'd. And as *God's Grace was ſufficient for him* in Proſperity; ſo,

3. Did it ſupport him in a day of Adverſity, and Affliction; he was, as he him-
2 Cor. 11. 23, 24, 25. ſelf tells us, *in ſtripes above meaſure, in Priſons frequent, in Deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received he forty ſtripes ſave one, thrice was he beaten with rods,*

once

once was he ſtoned, thrice he ſuffered ſhipwrack, a night and a day he was in the deep: in Journeyings often, in perils of Waters, in perils of Robbers, in perils by the Heathen, in perils by his own Countrymen, in perils in the City, in perils in the Wilderneſs, in perils in the Sea, in perils among ſt falſe Brethren; in Wearineſs and Painfulneſs, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirſt, in Faſtings often, in Cold and Nakedneſs, &c. And at laſt after Forty years Perſecution, he was beheaded at *Rome*; had not the *Grace of God been ſufficient for him*, he could not have ſuffered ſo courageouſly, nor have gloried in his Sufferings with ſuch Chriſtian Bravery, nor have promis'd himſelf the Crown of Righteouſneſs, with ſuch an earneſt Hope, and ſtedfaſt Aſſurance.

And Laſtly, we have his Infirmities; there was ſent him a *Thorn in the Fleſh, as the Meſſenger of Satan to buffet him*, by which ſome of the ancient Fathers underſtood ſome bodily Diſeaſe and Infirmity; but the generality of Interpreters, with more Probability affirm, That by this *Thorn in the Fleſh* is meant, not any particular Evil, but all manner of Temptation, by which the Devil ſtrove either to undermine his Faith, or to beat him from it. And that he might get the better of all

S. Chryſo. *the Iliack Paſſion.* Tertul. *the Head-ach.* Cyprian, *ſome Bodily Diſeaſe.*

theſe, and be more than a Conquerour, God Promiſes him his *Grace*, and aſſures him, that it ſhould be *ſufficient for him*; and we find by the Conſequence, that it had its deſired Effect; *This Grace of God was ſufficient* to keep him humble, when he beheld the moſt glorious Revelations, and was rapt up into the third Heaven, to ſupport him amidſt the moſt grievous Tribulations and Afflictions, to ſtrengthen and confirm him under Temptations, and tho' by earneſt Prayer he could not obtain a preſent Deliverance from his Temptations, yet by the Grace of God he reap'd the Fruit and Benefit of them; an Addition of Grace and ſpiritual Strength, whereby he was enabled to obtain the Victory over them in this World, and an eternal, and never-fading Crown of Glory in the next.

And now what remains, but that we make a right Improvement of all theſe Conſiderations, and direct our Thoughts from the Contemplation of theſe words in the General, to conſider the influence they ought to have on our particular Lives and Converſations. And to this end I ſhall endeavour to draw ſuch Inferences, as naturally flow from the Truths already deliver'd. And,

1. 'Tis the Intereſt of every Man to ſtate the Caſe plainly between God and his

his own Soul, and to examine his own Heart, whether he has got ſaving Grace or no; for ſince this alone is *ſufficient* to ſupport a Man in Affliction, and to keep him ſteady under all the Turns and Viciſſitudes of humane Affairs, it certainly behooves every one to be well aſſured, that he is poſſeſs'd of this Jewel of great Price; eſpecially ſince 'tis ſo frequently counterfeited, and Men are ſo ready to impoſe upon themſelves, and deceive their own Souls, and to embrace the ſhadow of Religion inſtead of the Subſtance. *Try and examine well your ſelves, know you not your own ſelves,* that you muſt have this *true ſaving Grace of God,* unleſs ye are Reprobates. Take heed all things are not according to the outward appearance; *the Prince of darkneſs* often transforms himſelf into *an Angel of Light*; A Man may hear, and read God's Word, and pray frequently and fervently, and yet not have the true Gift of Underſtanding, and Spiritual Wiſdom; He may (ſaith the Apoſtle) *Give his Body to be burnt, and all his Goods to feed the Poor,* and yet not have the Gift of Love; he may have a Faith ſufficient to remove Mountains, and yet be nothing; he may have *all Knowledge and all Prophecies* and the tongue of Men and Angels to utter it, and yet be only *a ſounding Braſs,* 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2, 3.

and a tinkling Cymbal. But a true *ſaving Grace* will diſcover it ſelf by ſuch Effects as theſe, by a ſincere Love to God, a fervent Charity to your Neighbour; and a ſober Meekneſs in the Eſtimation of your ſelves. If you have a ſincere Love to God, you will avoid Evil, and do Good out of ſuch Principles and Motives as theſe; becauſe the one is pleaſing, the other hateful in the ſight of God, becauſe Sin debaſes our Nature, and provokes God to withdraw his Grace from us, and grieves his Holy Spirit. If you have fervent Charity to your Neighbour; you will Love him for God's ſake, becauſe he enjoyns it, and maintain an univerſal Charity for all Men, as well Enemies as Friends; *you will Love thoſe who hate you, bleſs thoſe who Curſe you, and pray for thoſe who deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* If you have ſober Meekneſs, and a juſt Valuation of your ſelves, you will have a low and mean Opinion of your Self, and your Performances, and readily acknowledge your own Frailties, and be ſenſible of your Infirmities, and confeſs that naturally you are *inſufficient for every good work*; and that 'tis from *God's Grace alone that you are what you are*: You will rely on the infinite Mercy of God, and the ſole Merits of

Luk. 6. 13.

1 Cor. 15. 10.

of Jeſus Chriſt, and pray inceſſantly for the continuance of God's Favour and Aſſiſtance, without being puff'd up with an over-weening Opinion of your own Abilities, or caſting an envious Eye, or a diſdainful Look on the Attainments of other Men. Theſe are the Chief and Principal *Fruits of the Holy Spirit*, and are the neceſſary Effects of *ſaving Grace*: Gal. 5. 22. And if after a diligent Search, and ſerious Enquiry, it plainly appears, that you are poſſeſt of theſe Qualifications, you may then, and not otherwiſe be ſecure, that you have truly *God's Grace*, even the *Grace of Life*.

2. If you find you have *true Grace*, endeavour to cheriſh and encreaſe it: For though God has promiſed, *That his Grace ſhall be ſufficient for us*; yet this is a Promiſe made good only to ſuch Perſons, who perform the Condition annexed to it, that is, who joyn their own Endeavours with it. This is the Duty on our part to be perform'd, which if neglected will intercept the Emanations of *God's Grace*, grieve the Holy Spirit, and provoke him to depart from us, and forſake us; if therefore we would keep that *Grace* which God has given us, we muſt cheriſh and improve it, we muſt hearken to its Motions, obey its Commands, com-

ply with its Councels, and pray that God would continue and encreaſe it to us. Let us Pray for all ſuch Mercies, both Temporal and Spiritual as we ſtand in need of, but let us make our moſt fervent and frequent Addreſſes at the *Throne of Grace*, for the Bleſſed Influences and Aſſiſtances of God's Holy Spirit; and beg of God inſtantly, that he would be pleas'd to give us *his Grace*, to enlighten, aſſiſt and comfort us in all our Exigences, and to teach and enable us, to make a due Uſe and right Improvement of all other Mercies. Thus much in the General, but more particularly,

3. Let us learn to be thankful for that meaſure of *Grace*, which God has beſtow'd upon every one of us; ſince 'tis ſuch as God ſees *ſufficient* for us, and as much as will enable us to work out our Salvation. *If David* can ſlay the *Philiſtine* with a Sling and a ſtone, what need has he of *Saul*'s Armour? If God enables us to perform what he requires of us, what occaſion have we for any irreſiſtible Impulſe, or any force upon our Wills: When we may be ſav'd like Rational Creatures, by God's *Grace* in Conjunction with our own Endeavours, why ſhould we expect to be driven on by a blind Inſtinct or Fatality? If our Gifts are *ſufficient* to ſubdue our Spiri-

Spiritual Enemies, and obtain Heaven, we ought to be content, and thankfully acquesce in the Bounty of our good God, and liberal Benefactor. We are taught indeed *to covet earneſtly the beſt Gifts*, and to ſtrive continually *to grow in Grace*; but having done our Endeavours, we ought to reſt ſatisfy'd with that Meaſure and Proportion of Grace, which God is pleas'd to impart to us. If our Neighbour has greater Gifts than we have, it's a Sign that he has made more uſe of them, that his Neceſſities are greater, his Duties, Temptations, and Tryals more weighty, frequent, and troubleſome; whether therefore we have *ordinary Grace*, let us neither repine at God, nor be dejected in our ſelves, nor envy others: Or whether we have *extraordinary Grace*, let us not forget God, or be puſt up, or deſpiſe others; for *this diverſity of Gifts proceeds from the ſame Spirit, diſtributing to every Man as he will.*

1 Cor. 12. 31.

1 Cor. 12. 11.

4. Let us hence learn to endure Temptations, and Afflictions patiently. For though our Afflictions at the firſt ſight appear never ſo grievous and inſupportable, yet God has promis'd, that he will lay no more upon his Servants than they are able to bear; he will proportion his Aſſiſtance to their Wants, and give them

Strength

Strength to undergo that Burthen, he is pleas'd to lay upon them, *His Grace will be ſufficient for them.*

What good Man can undergo greater Troubles and Calamities than St. *Paul* did? And yet through the Grace of God, he was not only ſupported under them, but he arriv'd to ſo high a Degree of Truſt and Confidence in God, as to make them matter of Joy and Satisfaction, and to Glory in them: Where that long Catalogue of Afflictions is introduc'd with this Preface; 2 Cor. 11. 18. *Seeing that many Glory after the Fleſh, I will alſo Glory.* And let us but ſummon up our Chriſtian Courage, and Reſolution, let us but put forth that Strength which God has given us, and pray to God fervently, and unceſſantly to give us his Grace and Bleſſing; and there can no Affliction befall us, which we ſhall not be enabled to go through with, and at laſt ſee a Happy and Comfortable end of it; we ſhall receive the benefit of it in this World, and obtain the Reward of our Patience in the next. And therefore,

5. and Laſtly, We may from hence learn to refer the Succeſs of our Prayers unto God. If we do not preſently receive an Anſwer to our Petitions, let us not deſpond or conclude, that God either doth not hear, or will not grant a favourable

rable Anſwer to our Requeſts; for there may be many Reaſons, why God may defer the giving us thoſe Mercies we pray for, and ſometimes to deny us thoſe things which we think good and convenient for us: Perhaps there may be a Defect in our Prayers, we may not have pray'd with ſufficient Fervency, Piety, and Perſeverance: Perhaps the thing we pray for, is not expedient for us, or God ſees it will be more for our good to be without it; and in all theſe Caſes, though he denies our Requeſts, yet he conſults our benefit and advantage, *Let us not therefore be weary of well doing*, conſidering, *That at laſt we ſhall reap if we faint not, our Prayers will return into our Boſoms* loaden with Bleſſings. And in the mean while, it may be ſufficient to ſupport and comfort us, to conſider that God deals with us after the ſame manner he did with many holy Men, and eminent Saints, whoſe Examples are recorded in the Holy Scripture for our Inſtruction; *David*, tho' *a Man after God's own Heart*, yet by much Weeping, Faſting, and Praying, could not obtain the Life of his Child. And *Samuel* though a Prophet of the Lord, could not prevail with God to continue the Kingdom upon *Saul* and his Poſterity. St. *Paul* in the Text, though one of the Apoſtles of our Saviour Chriſt, and

Gal. 6. 9.

2 Sam. 12.

1 Sam. 16. 1.

and though he not only *pray'd thrice*, but *offer'd up vehement Supplications and Prayers*, could not obtain an Exemption from the *buffetings of Satan*. When therefore we offer up our Prayers, and Supplications to God, let us always make our Requeſts with Reſignation, and Submiſſion to the Divine Pleaſure, and after the Example of our Bleſſed Saviour, annex this Condition to all our Petitions; *Nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt.* And then if God doth not ſee fit to give us the Bleſſings we pray for, he will give us ſome better thing inſtead of them: Or if he doth not deliver us out of that Affliction or Trouble we groan under, he will beſtow upon us a ſuitable Meaſure of *Grace* to ſupport us under it. Either of theſe Conſiderations may be a ſufficient Encouragement to place our Truſt and Confidence upon God, and to Perſevere in our Addreſſes at the Throne of his *Grace*.

Mat. 26. 39.

SER-

SERMON IX.

PROV. IV. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all Diligence: For out of it are the Iſſues of Life.

IT was deſervedly look'd upon, as one of the chief Excellencies of the *Perſian* Laws, that they did not ſo much deſign the Puniſhment of Wickedneſs and Vice, as the uſing means to prevent the Commiſſion of it, that by a careful Education of Youth, in the Principles of Vertue and Morality, they took away the Cauſe of all inordinate Deſires and Affections, and render'd their Duty ſo familiar, and habitual to them, that they had no need of thoſe terrible Tortures, and Bloody Executions, whereby other Law-givers frighted their Subjects into Obedience. And of this Nature is the Duty recommended

mended, in the Text: For was but this one Precept ſincerely conform'd to, did we but perform this one Duty conſcientiouſly and honeſtly, we ſhould find very little Difficulty in yielding Obedience to all the reſt. For that Man would never commit Murder, that durſt not be angry without a Cauſe; nor be adulterous in the Act, who did not firſt tranſgreſs in his Deſire: Can we think he would be Guilty of a deliberate Perjury that fears an Oath, or defraud another, who permits not himſelf to Covet? For if the firſt Sparks of ill were quench'd within, they would never break out into a Flame; and therefore it was Advice well becoming the Wiſdom of *Solomon*. *To keep our Hearts with all Diligence: For out of them are the Iſſues of Life.*

In which Words be pleas'd to take Notice.

I. Of a Duty recommended to us. *To keep our Hearts.*

II. Of the manner how this Duty ought to be perform'd. *With all Diligence.*

III. Of the Motive to engage us thus to perform it. *For out of them are the Iſſues of Life.*

IV. I ſhall add ſome Directions to facilitate this Duty to us, and to aſſiſt us in the due Government of our Hearts.

1. Here

1. Here is a Duty enjoyn'd us. *To keep our Hearts.* Now the Heart has different Acceptations in the Holy Scripture; 'tis ſometimes taken for one Faculty of the Soul, and ſometimes for another; for the Underſtanding, the Will, the Affections, the Conſcience, and ſometimes for the whole Soul. I ſhall take it in the moſt comprehenſive Sence, and then it will denote to us all the Thoughts; and Inclinations, the Paſſions and Affections of the Soul. For 'twas the Opinion of the Ancients, that the Heart was the Seat of the Soul, and the Inſtrument of its moſt noble Operations. So that by *keeping the Heart* is meant, a looking into the moſt private Receſſes of our Soul, a curious and particular Obſervation what is tranſacted there; the taking a view of all our Inclinations, Paſſions, Deſires, and Affections, and comparing them with the Rule of God's Word, approving thoſe which are Good, and diſallowing thoſe which are Evil. It denotes alſo the making uſe of ſuch Means, as may be effectual to bring our Souls into a due Frame and Temper; the taking Care that the Thoughts of our Hearts, may not be taken up with any unlawful Object, or drawn out too far on any ſenſual Pleaſure, or worldly Advantage; but that

Pſal. 12.2. 2 Kin. 10. 30. Matth. 22. 37. 2 Sam. 24. 5. Rom. 7. 22. ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος *the Man within us.* 1 Pet. 3. 4. ὁ κρυπτὸς τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος. *the hidden Man of the Heart.*

we

we ſincerely deſire, and heartily endeavour to render them entirely conformable to the Laws of God.

Not that it is poſſible for the beſt, and moſt Holy Men, to govern their Hearts ſo exactly, as never to tranſgreſs the ſtrict Rules of their Duty, or never to offend in Thought: Alaſs! Vain and ſinful Thoughts will continually ſpring up in our Minds, they are the neceſſary Effects of our deprav'd Natures, and the Devil will take all Opportunities of inciting them in our Souls, and preſenting ſuch tempting and alluring Objects to our Phancies, as will produce inordinate Affections, and Deſires. 'Tis not in our Power, and therefore it cannot be our Duty, ſo to *keep our Hearts*, as that no vain Thoughts ſhould intrude themſelves there: Whilſt we continue in theſe frail Bodies, and Houſes of Clay, we ſhall be ſubject to many Paſſions, and the Fumes which ariſe from our inferiour Appetites will cloud our Underſtandings, and in ſome meaſure captivate our Reaſon. 'Tis plain and Evident, that many of our Thoughts proceed from the Frame and Conſtitution of our Bodies, and do in a great meaſure depend on the preſent Circumſtances we are in, and the Objects we converſe with. If we are of a cold and Phlegmatick Conſtitution, we

ſhall

ſhall be affected with Melancholy, and diſtruſtful Thoughts, and Phancies; if of a Cholerick Temper, Paſſion will ſometimes get the upper hand of us; when we are at Eaſe and in Proſperity, our Thoughts will be apt to be too gay and volatile; if in Pain or Miſery we muſt needs be ſenſible of it, and poring on it. And therefore all that a good Chriſtian can do, is to Endeavour to *keep his Heart*, in as good a Frame as he poſſibly can, to be continually on his Guard; and though he cannot attain to Perfection in this Life, yet to endeavour after it, by curbing his unruly Paſſions, governing his Affections, and Appetites by the Laws of Reaſon, and whenever they break out, and Act irregularly, reducing them within their due Bounds, and not allowing or delighting in the leaſt ſinful Thought, or ſuffering it to dwell or remain in our Hearts, but caſting it out with all ſpeed and Indignation imaginable. And this muſt be done

II. With all Diligence, which denotes theſe two things. 1. That this Duty ought to be our conſtant Employment, that we do not let any day ſlip without examining the Frame of our Hearts; for if we ſleep never ſo little, *The Evil one will take the Opportunity of ſowing his tares in our Souls*, if we are not always upon

our Guard, the Cares and Buſineſs of Life, or the Pomps, and Vanities of the World, will imprint either ſuch light and gariſh, or ſuch Melancholy, and diſtracting Ideas of things in our Minds, as will produce a fruitful Crop of Vain, Sollicitous, and Sinful Thoughts: This muſt be the buſineſs of every day, for the Thoughts of our Hearts are apt to be diſorder'd with every Guſt of Paſſion, and will require a watchful Eye, and a continual Care, to keep them in any tolerable Order. 2. *The keeping our Hearts with all Diligence*, implies the greateſt Intenſeneſs, and Application of Mind imaginable. For we muſt take a great deal of Pains to come to a through knowledge of the thoughts of our Heart. *The Heart of Man is deceitful, and deſperately wicked, who can know it?* Which Text, though primarily intended to denote the Difficulty of knowing what other Men think, or what Opinion we ſhall have of things hereafter; as appears by the coherence of the Words with thoſe which went before, yet they may well ſerve, to intimate to us the Difficulty of giving an impartial Judgment of the preſent Sentiments of our Minds, and what the true bent and Tendency of our Deſires, and Affections are; for we are ſo fond of our *Boſom ſins*, and thoſe *darling Delights*,

Jer. 17. 9.

lights, which either Cuſtom or Inclination has endear'd to us, that we think we can never ſufficiently careſs them; and though our Affections are drawn out after the moſt extravagant manner after them, yet we cloath them with ſuch plauſible and ſpecious Pretences, as make the moſt criminal Enjoyment of them appear (at leaſt to us) harmleſs and lawful. Who is there that will not readily acknowledge that we ought to Love God, with the moſt intenſe and zealous Affection, *With all our Soul, and with all our Strength*, and the good things of this World, in a lower and ſubordinate Degree? and yet how difficult a Task would it be to perſuade the moſt ſordid and miſerable Worlding, That *his Affections are not plac'd on things above, but on things below*? and though he is notoriouſly guilty of this Vice of Covetouſneſs, and ſees the Folly of it in other Men, yet is he not able to turn his Eyes inward, and to diſcover it in himſelf; ſo great Diligence and Induſtry doth it require, to range over all the turnings and windings of our Hearts, and to be acquainted with all thoſe crooked Paths, which Sin and Error have made in our Souls. And if there is ſo much Diligence requir'd to know the thoughts of our Hearts, it muſt needs call for our utmoſt Care to manage

them aright, and keep them in due Order. And therefore there will be the more need to conſider,

III. The Motive made uſe of in the Text to engage us, to the Performance of this Duty. *For out of them are the Iſſues of Life*, (*i. e.*) our Happineſs both in this Life, and the next doth depend upon a diligent and conſcientious Diſcharge of this Duty.

1. Our Happineſs in this World depends upon it. For,

1. *By keeping our Hearts*, we ſhall learn to manage our Affairs with Prudence and Diſcretion. For the greateſt part of thoſe extravagant Actions which Men commit, proceed either from the want of a due Deliberation before they enter upon Action: Or, a diſcreet executing what their Reaſon tells them, is fit and ought to be done. Either they are hurried on by the Violence of their ſenſual Appetites, and head-ſtrong Paſſions, or byaſs'd by ſome inordinate Luſt, and corrupt Affection, and theſe betray them into indiſcreet, abſurd, and ſinful Words, and Actions. Now he that is accuſtom'd *to keep his Heart*, conſiders well and deliberately every Circumſtance of an Action, before he puts his Thoughts into Excution;

on; he weighs firſt his own Power and Ability, and then enquires both into the Lawfulneſs, and Expediency of the thing he undertakes; by which means he avoids thoſe Rocks upon which ſo many ſplit, (*i. e.*) Raſhneſs in ſetting upon thoſe things he has neither Power nor Skill to perform on the one hand, and a too great Diffidency, and diſtruſt of his own Abilities on the other: The firſt of theſe produces Shame and Diſappointment, when a Man finds himſelf not able to compaſs the End he aim'd at, and falls ſhort of his too bold and daring Deſigns; the ſecond deprives him of many valuable Benefits and Advantages which lie in his way, and require only the Pains of ſeeking after them, and poſſeſſing himſelf of them. And in truth ſince all our Words and Actions are the Streams, which flow from the Fountain of our Hearts, therefore it muſt needs follow, that he who governs his Heart wiſely and prudently, cannot go far aſtray in his Words and Actions, all our vital Operations will ſavour of that Root and Principle from whence they proceed; and a Holy Life muſt needs be the neceſſary Effect of a ſanctified Heart.

2. A due Government of our Hearts, will produce Peace, and quiet of Mind, by freeing us from thoſe raging Paſſions, and ſenſual Affections, from proud, ma-

licious, and envious Thoughts, which diſturb our Peace and Quiet, and render our Lives uneaſie and burthenſome to us. For it has been an old, and a very true Obſervation, that Content and Satisfaction, and by conſequence Happineſs in this Life, doth not proceed from the abundance of the Goods of this World, or the indulging our ſelves in ſenſual Pleaſure, but from the Temper and Conſtitution of our Minds; in a contentedneſs and ſatisfaction with that Condition, the wiſe Providence of God has allott'd us, and a diſcreet Enjoyment of thoſe good things he has made our Portion in this World. A ſound Mind in a ſound Body, was the wiſe Wiſh of a Heathen Poet; for that Man whoſe Heart is full of Envy or Malice, or ſollicitous Care, or Pride, would be uneaſie on a Throne, and miſerable amidſt the moſt plentiful affluence of worldly Enjoyments, but he who has obtain'd the *Art of Governing his Thoughts*, by the Laws of Reaſon and Religion, will enjoy the Pleaſure of a quiet and compos'd Mind, amidſt all the noiſe and hurry of this World, and remain contented and ſatisfy'd with his Condition, without caſting either an envious Eye on the Poſſeſſions of thoſe who are above him, or a diſdainful Look on thoſe who are in a meaner Condition than himſelf. From hence will flow,

3. Peace

3. Peace of Conſcience; for *if our Hearts condemn us not then have we confidence towards God*, that Man who has been ſo careful, as to ſet a ſtrict and diligent Watch over his Thoughts, will be from thence aſſur'd, that his Heart is upright towards God, and has good grounds to believe that he is in his Favour, and under his Protection, and this will produce the greateſt Joy and Satisfaction imaginable; and therefore 'twas good Advice which the Oracle gave *Cræſus*. 1 Joh. 3. 21.

Σ'αυτὸν γνώσκων ἐυδαίμων Κρῖσε πεφήσεις, the way to be Happy is to know thy Self; for a through Knowledge of our own Hearts, and the Government of our Thoughts according to the Rule of God's Word, is a chief Ingredient, as well as the principal Cauſe of a happy Life in this World.

Theſe are the bleſſed Effects of *Keeping our Hearts* as to the Concerns of this Life; but if we conſider, 2. Its influence on our eternal Happineſs, we muſt needs judge it highly reaſonable to uſe our utmoſt Care and Diligence in the Performance of this Duty. For,

1. God has made the *Keeping our Hearts* one part of our Duty. The words of the Text are not only a prudential Councel containing Matter of Advice, but a Poſitive

ſitive Command; God expects we ſhould comply with it, and yield our Obedience to it. 'Tis true, the *Jews* of old did imagine that Thoughts were not ſinful, unleſs immediately Blaſphemous againſt God, and therefore they did not blame the Intention of the Heart to commit Murder or Adultery, unleſs 'twas actually put in Execution; which we have the leſs reaſon to wonder at, becauſe there are ſo many amongſt us, who maintain this abſurd Opinion, and Fanſie their *Thoughts are ſo free*, that they ſhall never be call'd to Account for them; if they can but Act ſo cunningly as to eſcape the Cenſures of Men, if they can but ſpeak *words ſmoother than Oil*, they are not at all ſollicitous how their Hearts ſtand affected. But let theſe Men conſider, that at the laſt day *when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of Men*, we ſhall be call'd to an Account for all *the Thoughts and Intents of our Heart*, as well as for the loudeſt Words, and moſt public Actions; in God's Book not only the Members of our Body, but the Thoughts of our Mind are written; and therefore we are commanded, *not to make Proviſion for the Luſt of the Fleſh*, μὴ προνοιαν ποιεῖσθε, not to contrive before-hand, how we may fulfil our ſinful Appetites and Deſires. *Solomon* tells us, *That the Thought*

Pſal. 55. 21.

Rom. 2. 15.

Rom. 13. 14.

Thought of Fooliſhneſs is ſin, (i. e. a fooliſh Thought) and that *a Man of wicked Devices, or Thoughts God will condemn.* And St. *John* affirms, That *whoſoever hates his Brother*, or retains any Rancour or Malice in his Heart *is a Murderer:* Now as on the one hand, God will accept of the ſincere Intention of thoſe Perſons, who fail in their Obedience only for want of Power and Ability, to perform what he has commanded them: So on the other, our Thoughts may be ſinful in the ſight of God, though we have neither Will nor Power to put them in Execution. *Abraham* only intended to Sacrifice his Son *Iſaac*, and this holy Purpoſe of his Heart *was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs*; and when *Sarah* diſ-believ'd the Promiſe of God, and derided it in her Heart, ſhe is ſaid to laugh within her ſelf, and God reſents the Provocation. And though 'tis true, that when a wicked Thought is put into Execution, and breaks out into a wicked Act, when *Luſt has conceiv'd and brought forth Sin*, 'tis of a far more heinous Nature, and deeper Dye, than when it was only an *Embryo*, or in the Birth; yet in many Reſpects our Thoughts may be more wicked, than either our Words or Actions can be. For, 1. Our Thoughts are more numerous than our Actions. There muſt

Prov. 24. 9. Prov. 12. 2. 1 Joh. 3. 15. Heb. 11. 17. Gen. 18. 12. Jam. 1. 15.

be

be many Preparatory Motions of the Mind, many Thoughts twiſted together, to produce one deliberate ſinful Action: How many Plottings and Contrivings, Deſires and Hopes, Wiſhes and Complacencies, muſt go before the Commiſſion of every evil Deed? There muſt be firſt a Scheme erected in our Minds, the Means and Methods muſt be reſolv'd on, the Inſtruments muſt be choſen, and the thing frequently acted over in our Thoughts, before any notorious ſinful Action can be committed. 2. The ſame Sin may be acted over a thouſand times in the Mind, which can only be once perform'd in the outward Action. We may take a great deal of Pleaſure and Delight in recalling the Sins we have formerly committed, in repreſenting them in our Fancies, and reacting them over in our Imaginations, and hereby draw down a freſh Guilt upon our ſelves. Nay, 3. We may be guilty of thoſe Sins, by contriving them in our Minds, which can never poſſibly be really acted; thus the Covetous Man may rob his Neighbour of his Wealth, though he never obtain the Poſſeſſion of it, the Malicious and Revengeful may murder his Enemy, when out of his reach, and the Cruel and Blood-thirſty may imagine all Mankind to have but one Neck, and then

cut

cut it off, and the Atheiſt may *ſay in his Heart there is no God*, and fancy him excluded out of the World. From theſe, and ſuch other Conſiderations 'tis obvious to conclude, That we are not left at liberty to think as we pleaſe, but that the Government of our Thoughts is a neceſſary and indiſpenſable Duty. Nay ſo abſolutely neceſſary is it to our eternal Welfare to *keep our Hearts*, that no Word or Action can be good or acceptable unto God, which doth not proceed from a ſanctify'd Heart. A wicked Man may perform many Acts of Juſtice and Charity, but if they do not proceed from a good Diſpoſition of Mind, they are only *ſplendida peccata*, counterfeit Vertues, and therefore the Apoſtle tells us, That *if we give our Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity*, (*i. e.*) a ſincere Love to God, and our Neighbour (which is ſeated in the Heart) all thoſe good Deeds will profit us nothing.

Pſal. 14. 1.

1 Cor. 13. 1.

2. The *Keeping of our Hearts*, is conducive to our eternal Happineſs, becauſe the maintaining our Communion with God depends on it. Now our Communion with God is maintain'd by our offering up Prayers and Praiſes unto him, and his Acceptance of them, and beſtowing on us, the bleſſed Influences of his Holy Spirit;

rit; and if ſo, then what Sacrifice of Prayer and Thankſgiving can be acceptable unto God, which is offer'd up from a Heart full of impure Deſires and Affections, reeking with Luſt, or Anger, or Revenge? He is a pure and holy Spirit, and Iſa. 57. 15. *delights to dwell in a humble and contrite Heart*; and if our Hearts are infected with Envy, Malice, Pride, or Luſt, we ſhall grieve him, and he will depart from us, and then the Devils thoſe impure Spirits will take Poſſeſſion of our Souls, they will become *a Cage of theſe unclean Birds*, a fit Habitation for theſe Legions to dwell in.

3. A right Frame of Heart is a Qualification abſolutely neceſſary, to render us capable, of enjoying eternal Happineſs, in the Life to come. For our Happineſs in the other World, will in a great meaſure depend on the Preparations we have made for it in this: Our Life here is a State of Probation and Trial, a ſmall Span of time allotted us, to furniſh our ſelves with vertuous Habits, and Divine Qualities, (thoſe wedding Garments) which will render us welcome Gueſts at the Marriage of the Lamb. And therefore if we would have any well-grounded Hopes of Happineſs in the other World, we muſt make it our Employment here; to reſtrain our Paſſions,

Paſſions, moderate our Affections, enflame our Hearts with Zeal and Devotion, and accuſtom our ſelves to holy Meditation; theſe are Qualifications abſolutely neceſſary to make us reliſh the Pleaſures of another Life. For we may with as good Reaſon hope to ſatisfie our Hunger with precious Stones and Diamonds, or our Thirſt with the ſight of ſtately Buildings, or goodly Apparel; as that a malicious, envious, luſtful, or covetous Perſon, (whilſt he continues ſo) ſhould take delight in the *Beatifical Viſion*, and in ſinging Praiſes and Hallelujahs unto God. So neceſſary is it, that we cleanſe and purifie our Deſires and Affections, to qualifie and diſpoſe us for eternal Happineſs, as well as for the Happineſs of this Life. I come now in the laſt Place,

IV. To add ſome Directions to facilitate this Duty to us, and to aſſiſt us to govern our Hearts aright.

1. Be diligent and induſtrious in the Buſineſs of your lawful Calling. For every Man either has or ought to have ſome lawful Employment or Calling, in the Exerciſe of which he ſhould endeavour to promote the Glory of God, and to be a uſeful Member of that Community in which he lives; thoſe who by the Eminency of their Birth, and the largeneſs

neſs of their Fortunes, move in a ſuperior Orb, and ſeem to be freed from that Original Curſe, *of getting their Bread with the ſweat of their brows*, are ſo far from being exempted from it, that as they have more Talents committed to their Truſt, ſo their Accounts will be the greater at the laſt day. Now by Diligence in our lawful Callings, we ſhall keep our Minds intent upon their proper Objects; and hereby raiſe up uſeful, and profitable Thoughts in our Souls. Nay we may improve the Buſineſs of our Callings, to adminiſter occaſion for devout and holy Meditations. *Thoſe who go down to the Sea in Ships* (ſays the Pſalmiſt) *ſee the Works of the Lord, and his wonders in the Deep.* The Tradeſman whilſt he weighs his Wares, conſiders, that all his Thoughts, Words, and Actions, *are weigh'd in the Balance of the Sanctuary*; the Husbandman when he Tills the ground may call to mind, *What long Furrows the Scourges made on the back of our Saviour*; when he beholds his Crop, it may put him in mind of the Reſurrection; that as the Corn periſhes in the ground, and ſprouts out again more green and freſh than it was before, ſo our vile Bodies, after they are buried in the Grave, ſhall ariſe at the laſt Day in greater Glory and Splendour; when he gathers his Grain into

Gen. 3. 19.

Pſal. 107. 23.

Pſal. 129. 3.

into his Barn, he is put in mind of the Day of Judgment, when the Good ſhall be taken up into Heaven, and the Wicked *like chaff ſhall be burn'd with unquenchable Fire:* Thus the Buſineſs of every Man's particular Calling, whatſoever it is (I have here given only the moſt obvious Inſtances) may be improv'd to raiſe up Religious Thoughts; and the Mind may be, and for the moſt part is, beſt imploy'd, when the hands are at work. On the contrary, there is nothing more fruitful of vain and ſinful Thoughts, than Sloth, and Lazineſs; for our Thoughts are reſtleſs, and in perpetual Motion, and will grind one upon another, if they have no good Employment. *Idleneſs teaches much evil* (ſays the wiſe Son of *Syrach*) ſome Copies have it *all evil.* The Devil thought the fitteſt time to tempt our Bleſſed Saviour was, when he was alone, and in the *Wilderneſs*; and that ſaying of *Cato* was ſubſcrib'd to by the wiſer Heathens as an Oracle, *nihil agendo, male agere diſces*: for when Men have nothing to do, the Devil will be ſure to find them Employment: And therefore it ought to be our Care, even when we unbend our Minds from more ſerious Matters, and allow our ſelves thoſe Diverſions, which the frailty of our Natures, and our good God has indulg'd us in, to employ

Matth. 3. 12.

Eccl. 33. 27.

ploy our Minds on ſuch harmleſs, and innocent Recreations, as may render them more active, and our Bodies more vigorous in the Service of our Maker.

2. Next to Idleneſs, let us avoid bad Company; for 'tis a common and true Obſervation, that a Man may be known by the Company he keeps; Converſation wins inſenſibly upon us, has the moſt endearing Charms, and makes the moſt laſting Impreſſion upon our Minds.

3. Check wicked Thoughts at the firſt appearance, and let us not ſuffer them to dwell in our Hearts, for the ſooner we caſt them out, we ſhall do it the more eaſily; every moment we ſuffer them to remain there, they will grow more powerful, and the Difficulty will encreaſe by the neglect of our Duty. If therefore we find in our Hearts *any wicked Imagination, that exalts it ſelf*
1 Cor. 10. 5. *againſt the Knowledge of God*, and is contrary to the known Rules of our Duty; let us maintain no Treaty with it, or excuſe it ſaying,
Gen. 19. 20. *Is it not a little one*, but put it out of our Minds, as ſoon as poſſibly we can. The Devil will be continually ſuggeſting evil Thoughts into our Fanſies, and ſolliciting us with the moſt alluring, though pernicious Objects; he will endeavour to diſturb us in our Devotions, by diverting our Affections, and turning the Cur-

Current of our Thoughts on our worldly Affairs, and caſting into our Minds, vain and ſinful Imaginations; theſe are thoſe *Birds of Prey*, which attend the moſt pure and holy Sacrifice: But then 'tis our Buſineſs to drive them away, and not to harbour, or allow of any thought in our Minds, which we ſhould be aſham'd to have diſcover'd in our Words and Actions. To incite us to the performance of this Duty; let us conſider, Gen. 15. 11.

1. What Pains wicked Men take to get rid of good Thoughts. If they happen into Company, where good Diſcourſe and pious Admonitions, have made ſome Impreſſions upon their Minds, if ſome Truth is ſet home upon their Conſciences, by ſome good Book, or awakening Sermon, or they happen to be put in mind of their latter End, and a Judgment to come, by a fit of Sickneſs, or the Death of ſome Friend or Relation, or any other ſurprizing Emergency; how reſtleſs are they till they have got theſe Thoughts out of their Minds, and are rid of theſe uneaſie Companions? Do they not run from one Buſineſs to another, from one Diverſion to another, and turn every ſtone, to ſtill the Clamours of an accuſing Conſcience? ſhall not we uſe our utmoſt endeavour to caſt out ſinful and wicked Thoughts, and

Quantascunque tenebras factis tuis perſtrinxeris, Deus lumen eſt. Tertul.

take as much Pains to be happy, as others do to be wretched and miſerable? Conſider farther, That God ſees and takes notice of all our Thoughts, *He pierces even to the dividing aſunder of the joynts and marrow: And diſcerns even the moſt hidden Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* Heb. 4. 12. Now if the Sinner is ſo effectually aw'd, and deter'd from his Sin, by the Preſence of ſome grave Perſon, who remarks and over-ſees his Doings; how dares he allow himſelf in wicked Thoughts, when he conſiders that the great God of Heaven and Earth looks down upon him, and *beholds the Intents and Purpoſes of his Heart*; that at the laſt Day all his moſt ſecret Thoughts ſhall be expos'd to the view of Men and Angels, and wrote in ſuch legible Characters, that the whole World may read them. To both theſe add this Conſideration; conſider what has been the Event of harbouring evil Thoughts in our Minds, what the iſſue has been, and in all Likelihood will be? Did not all the preſumptuous Sins you ever committed in your Life-time, begin in your Heart? were they not forg'd and contriv'd there? And how can you tell, but that the Allowance of one wicked Thought, may be the Riſe of the moſt villanous Act? No Man was ever wicked all of a ſudden. The Sinner

ner at firſt is timorous and baſhful, and goes on by Degrees, till at laſt he arrives at the higheſt Pitch of hardneſs, and Impenitency. Many a Man there is, who thinks it can be no heinous Offence to caſt a covetous Eye on other Mens Goods, or a wanton Look on his Neighbours Wife; and yet whoſoever doth not reſtrain theſe evil Affections of his Mind, will ſoon lie under an unavoidable Temptation, to commit the groſſer Acts of Theft and Adultery; for if we allow our ſelves in the lighter Breaches of our Duty, we ſhall ſoon come to think every Sin to be ſo, and wicked Thoughts harbour'd and encouraged, will produce wicked Actions. Had *David* at firſt ſuppreſs'd his luſtful Thoughts after the Wife of *Uriah*, he had never added the Murder of the Husband to Adultery with the Wife; but when once he gave way to ſinful Thoughts, this Man after God's own Heart, this holy Prophet, as well as great King was born down the Stream of his vicious Inclinations, and committed the vileſt Acts of the moſt preſumptuous Sins. Conſider therefore with thy ſelf, that though a vain and wicked Thought is a Sin of Infirmity, when it enters into our Mind, without our Conſent and Approbation, yet we ſhall very much encreaſe the

Guilt, when we allow our ſelves in it, and it may prove very dangerous to our eternal Welfare.

4. If ſinful Thoughts ſtill preſs into our Minds, divert them to ſome holy Meditation, and take this hint of bending your Thoughts to the contrary Duty. Thus if you are tempted to plot and contrive the Commiſſion of any Sin, make this the Occaſion of fortifying, and ſtrengthning your Reſolutions againſt the Commiſſion of that very Sin; of conſidering its evil Nature, and dangerous Conſequences, and hereby encreaſe your Hatred and Deteſtation of it. Are the ſinful Pleaſures which you have formerly enjoy'd, repreſented to your Fanſie? Let the Remembrance of them renew your Sorrow and Repentance, for your diſobedience to God's Law, and the Breach of his Commandments, and put you upon begging God's Grace and Aſſiſtance, that for the time to come, you may live more uprightly, and unblameably. Are you perplex'd and troubled with blaſphemous and Atheiſtical Thoughts? Fall preſently on the Contemplation of the wonderful Works, which he has made, and the curious Operations of his hands, conſider this ſtupendious Fabrick of the World, the infinite Variety, and yet exact Order, and due Subordination of Beings con-

contained in it; ask thy ſelf, what Power it was which firſt created it, and ſtill continues to preſerve it, which has furniſh'd irrational Creatures with unerring Inſtincts, that teaches the Bird to build its Neſt, the Spider to weave its Web; look into the curious Frame and Compoſition of that leſſer World thy own Body, and behold there, how *fearfully and wonderfully thou art made.* And by ſuch Contemplations as theſe affect thy Mind with a humble Awe and devout Reverence of God's Power and Majeſty. Are you tempted to Envy the Proſperity of your Neighbour? Conſider how many Gifts of God's Bounty you have receiv'd, how much you enjoy more than you deſerve, and how unthankful and ungrateful you have been for thoſe good things, God has already given into your hands. Are you given to luſtful Thoughts? Turn this ſtrange Fire into a Holy Zeal for God's Glory. Do preſumptuous Thoughts riſe up in your Heart? Conſider your former Sins, and repeated Provocations againſt God, and take occaſion from hence to exerciſe your Humility. Are you overwhelm'd with Deſpair? Call to mind God's gracious Promiſes, and admire his infinite Goodneſs, who has given his only begotten Son, and ſent him into the World on Purpoſe to atone for Pſal. 139. 14.

your Sins, and to accompliſh the great Work of your Salvation, and ſtill makes you the Proffers of Pardon and Forgiveneſs; by ſuch Meditations as theſe, you will *imitate your heavenly Father*, in drawing Good out of Evil, and make the Temptations of the Devil, the occaſion of promoting your eternal Welfare. Nay, if you thus *reſiſt the Devil he will flee from you*, his Aſſaults will be neither ſo frequent, nor ſo furious, when he finds they ſerve only to exerciſe your Graces, and make you more watchful.

James 4. 7.

5. Seaſon thy Heart every Morning with ſome Holy Meditation, Dedicate the Firſt-fruits of thy Thoughts unto God. *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me O God* (ſays the Pſalmiſt) *how great is the ſum of them? If I ſhould count them, they are more in number than the Sand: When I wake I am ſtill with thee.* The conſtant and ſerious Meditation, on thoſe great Motives to a Holy Life; the Example of our Bleſſed Saviour, the Torments of Hell, the Joys of Heaven, the certainty of Death, the Terrors of Judgment, if made the Subject of our Morning Meditations, would be a Spring and Source of good Thoughts all the day long, and produce in our Minds, ſuitable Deſires and Affections; and to this End let us conſtantly read

Pſal. 139. 17, 18.

ſome

ſome Portion of the Holy Scripture, *This will be a Lamp to our feet, and a light to our Paths*; it will both inform our Judgments, what we ought to do, and incline us to walk in the Way of God's Commandments. Pſal. 119. 115.

6. And laſtly, Let us beſeech Almighty God that he would give us his Grace, and enable us with the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, to *Keep our Hearts*, and govern our Deſires and Affections. And though this Duty is too difficult to be perform'd by our own Strength, yet we may be aſſur'd, that God will enable us to go through with it, becauſe he requires nothing of us, which is not in our Power to perform. He has promis'd, That *he will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking Flax*, but that he will encourage every Effort that we make towards a good and vertuous Life. His Grace was never deny'd to any one, who did but ſincerely deſire it, and endeavour to render himſelf capable of receiving of it, *To him that asks it ſhall be given*, not only what he prays for, but alſo the larger Effuſions of his Holy Spirit, he often prevents our Prayers, and is more ready to give, than we are either to deſire or receive. Iſa. 42. 3. Luk. 6. 38.

And now what remains, but that we being furniſh'd with theſe Helps, and aſſur'd of the Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, immediately ſet upon the Practice of this Duty; and endeavour with all Care and Diligence imaginable, to keep a ſtrict Watch over the Thoughts and Affections of our Hearts. 'Tis true, this cannot be perform'd without much Pains and Induſtry, but what Deſign which is either great and glorious, uſeful and honourable, can be compaſs'd without Labour; and yet we have this Encouragement, that every day will make it more eaſie, the greateſt Hardſhip is in the beginning: But when we have accuſtom'd our ſelves to pious and devout Meditations, they will become more delightful to us, than the moſt voluptuous and ſenſual Imaginations. We ſhall take more Pleaſure in meditating on God's Word, and contemplating *thoſe Joys which are at God's right hand*, and will be the Lot and Portion of the Bleſſed in Glory, than we could do in an earthly Paradiſe. Certainly there can be no greater Happineſs on this ſide Heaven, than that which the pious and devout Soul enjoys, when he is enflam'd with Zeal, and tranſported with Devotion, when with St. *Paul* he is as it were *caught up into Heaven*, on the

the Wings of Contemplation, and receives the earneſt of the *Beatifical Viſion.* Theſe are Joys beyond the Ken of a ſenſual Mind, and the peculiar Rewards of thoſe Perſons, who have prepar'd themſelves, and render'd their Hearts capable of receiving them, by cleanſing them of all ſinful and impure Luſts, and decking and adorning them with Holy Affections and Deſires. With theſe Men the Holy Spirit will take up his abode, and where he dwells there muſt needs be Love, and Peace, and Joy unexpreſſible: This is the moſt Bleſſed Condition we can attain to in this Life, and the ſureſt Mark and Token, that we ſhall be eternally Happy hereafter.

SERMON X.

MATTH. VII. 12.

Therefore all things whatſoever ye would, that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

COMMENTATORS put their Invention upon the Rack, to find out a Connection between theſe Words, and thoſe which went before. The word (*therefore*) ſeems to denote that they are an Inference drawn from preceding Premiſes. Some there are, who think that they bear a Relation to thoſe Precepts, in the fifth Chapter of this Goſpel, and the beginning of this, which treat of the Love of our Neighbour: Others are of Opinion, that they relate only to the ſeventh and following Verſes of this Chapter, in which our Saviour teaches us how we ought to Pray, and then (as

(as they think) preſently adds a Rule for the Government of our Actions; hereby intimating to us, That our Prayers and Endeavours ought to go hand in hand, and that when we pray to God for thoſe things we want, we ought to make uſe of the Means which God has appointed for the obtaining them. This is certainly true, and affords us matter of wholſome Advice, but upon reading the Chapter we ſhall find, that this Connection ſeems to be rather ſtrain'd and extorted from the Text, than the natural Deſign of the inſpired Pen-man; and therefore I ſhall rather look upon theſe Words as an intire Propoſition, containing matter of Advice, how we ſhould behave our ſelves towards our Neighbour: And the rather becauſe 'tis obſerv'd that this Particle (*therefore*) is often redundant, and ſerves only to paſs from one Subject to another, and in the *Syriack Verſion*, 'tis wholly omitted. As to the Occaſion of theſe words, 'tis highly probable, that they were deſign'd to oppoſe the groſs Miſtake of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who doated ſo much on the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewiſh Law, as to prefer them before the Works of Juſtice, and Mercy, as may plainly be gathered from the thirteenth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, the

the twenty third and twenty fourth Verſes. And therefore we find the Prophets ſo earneſt in exhorting them to Works of Juſtice and Mercy, proving that theſe are the great Lines of our Duty, and that in Compariſon with theſe, the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law were of little value or worth. And the ſame Deſign is carried on by our Saviour in the Text; he endeavours to take them off from being too nice and ſuperſtitious in the Obſervance of the Ceremonial part of the Jewiſh Law, and to engage them in the purſuit after real Holineſs, and the Practice of the Moral Precepts of Religion. *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Iſa. 1. 11.

Amos 5. 22.

In my Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I ſhall Conſider,

I. The Meaning and Deſign of this Rule.

II. I ſhall mark out its Bounds and Limitations.

III. I ſhall recommend it to your Practice, by ſhewing its Uſefulneſs and Excellency.

IV. I ſhall conclude with ſome few Reflections on what has been ſaid in the preceeding Diſcourſe.

I. As

I. As to the Meaning and Deſign of theſe words. They are certainly an Appeal to that firſt Principle of Self-preſervation, which God has implanted in all animate Beings. Irrational Creatures are guided to it by Inſtinct (*i. e.*) the unerring hand of Divine Providence, but Mankind is directed by Reaſon, which teaches them to ſeek after thoſe things which ſupport their Being, and by neceſſary Conſequence, which contribute to their Well-being and Happineſs in this World. Now ſince our Well-being and Happineſs in this World doth conſiſt in the Enjoyment of thoſe agreeable Objects, which are preſented to our Appetites and Deſires, according to the Rules of right Reaſon; And ſince the ſame Objects produce the ſame Inclinations, and Paſſions in all Men; therefore from hence will reſult an unavoidable Obligation of dealing by all Men, as we our ſelves would deſire to be dealt withal, if we were in their Condition and they in ours; for ſince we ſhould neceſſarily deſire ſuch and ſuch things, if we were in the ſame Circumſtances our Neighbour is in, therefore 'tis but reaſonable, that we ſhould grant him the ſame things when in our Power, which we ſhould expect from him, if he were in our Circumſtances, and we in his. This there-

therefore is an univerſal Rule of Juſtice and Equity, and made uſe of by our Saviour Chriſt, to ſupply the Defects of thoſe particular Laws which he has laid down in his Holy Goſpel, that when we are at a loſs how to Act (either becauſe the Action is not determin'd in the Holy Writ, nor have we any plain Precept for the performance of it, or when we ſuſpect that our Paſſions, and corrupt Inclinations have clapt a byaſs upon our Reaſon, or when we would diſcover the due meaſure of our Actions, and with what agreeable Circumſtances they ought to be perform'd) then we may appeal to this diſ-intereſs'd Judge, which God has plac'd in our Boſoms, and demand boldly of our ſelves; how we ſhould deſire to be dealt with, and what we might reaſonably expect, if we were in the ſame Condition our Neighbour is in. For the Holy Goſpel has not provided particular Laws of equal extent, with all the Actions of humane Life, nor given Directions how, and in what manner, and in what meaſure, every Circumſtance of an Action ought to be perform'd: If this were attempted we might well ſay, *That the World it ſelf could not contain the Books which ſhould be written.* And therefore the Goſpel only Chalks out to us the great Lines of our Duty, it commands

Joh. 21. 25.

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the Practice of the moſt neceſſary Precepts, ſuch as are thoſe which are enjoyn'd in this and the preceding Chapters, and leaves our Reaſon to work out what ought to be done upon particular and caſual Emergencies, to direct in ſome Caſes what is lawful, and in moſt what is prudent and expedient: And for our greater Security has laid down ſome general Rules, which if ſeriouſly conſider'd, and carefully attended to, will be ſufficient to direct our Reaſon in all its Judgments, and Determinations. Thus in Relation to the Duties of the firſt Table which principally concerns the Worſhip of God, the Holy Goſpel commands us, *To Worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth*, to direct our Addreſſes to God alone, through one Mediator our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, and ſeveral other particular Precepts it gives us, as to the neceſſary and Eſſential parts of Divine Worſhip. But our Directions how to behave our ſelves as to the Circumſtances of Worſhip, are all referr'd to this general Rule. *Let all things be done decently and in order:* And thus in Relation to the Duties of the ſecond Table, which concern our Neighbour; our Saviour has laid down many excellent Precepts, in this admirable, tho' ſhort Epitome of Morality, his Sermon on the Mount,

Joh. 4. 24.

1 Cor. 14. 40.

Mount, and then Cloſes all with this Rule of univerſal Influence, *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

The End and Deſign then of this Rule, is to teach us how to behave our ſelves towards our Neighbour, which is the moſt difficult and moſt neglected part of our Duty. For we are generally ſo much byaſs'd by Self-Love, that when any Controverſie is ſtarted, in which our own Intereſt is concern'd, we are very nice and exact in Claiming what belongs to us, and is our due; but when the Scales are turn'd, and 'tis our Duty to weigh and conſider, what our Neighbour may juſtly expect from us, then we make uſe of falſe Weights and Meaſures, and too often determine directly contrary to the plain Rules of Juſtice and Honeſty. We are not ſo apt Scholars in learning this Leſſon of Charity, as we are ſevere Maſters in exacting it from others. And therefore,

II. I ſhall mark out the Bounds and Limitations of this Rule, and conſider the juſt extent and Latitude of theſe words. *Whatſoever ye would*, &c.

1. 'Tis evident, that this Rule is determin'd to the Duties of the ſecond Table; for

for ſo 'tis limitted in the very words of the Text. *'Tis whatſoever ye would, that* Men *ſhould do unto you*, &c. Some there are indeed, who would have this Rule extend alſo to the Duties of the firſt Tab'e, and to be the meaſure of our Duty towards God, but this without the ſupport of any good Reaſon; for though Religion may properly be ſaid to be Juſtice towards God; becauſe all the Service which we owe, and are able to pay unto God, is highly juſt and reaſonable, and what is but our bounden Duty and Service; yet the diſtance is ſo great between an infinitely perfect Being, and us Poor, vile Worms, *His Works are ſo wonderful, and his ways paſt finding out*, that 'tis utterly impoſſible, and 'twould be the higheſt Preſumption for us, to weigh our Actions in the ſame Balance with his. Theſe words are therefore limitted to the Duties of the ſecond Table, as may be plainly made out from that parallel Place, where our Bleſſed Saviour being ask'd this Queſtion, *Maſter which is the great Commandment of the Law?* Returns this Anſwer, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and this is the firſt and great Commandment, and the ſecond is like unto it, Namely, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf:* And then adds, *on theſe two* Matt. 22. 3.

hang all the Law and the Prophets. Where we may ſee that this Rule is made to be the Sum and Subſtance only of the ſecond Table.

2. This Rule is determin'd to thoſe things which tend to the benefit and advantage of our Neighbour. And therefore St. *Auſtin* reads the Words, *Quæcunque bona*, &c. *Whatſoever* good things *ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo to them.* For there are ſome Men of ſuch envious and malicious Tempers, that they would willingly undergo any ſeverity themſelves, on Condition that their Enemy might endure the ſame; and ſuffer their own Houſes to be burnt, that his might periſh in the Flames; nay, loſe one of their own Eyes, that he might be depriv'd of the like Advantage. Like the pretended Mother of the living Child, would ſay; *Let neither of us have it, but let it be divided.* Others there are of ſo proud and churliſh a Diſpoſition, that they ſcorn to be oblig'd, and had rather be without a Benefit, than to be beholding for it to one they hate: Such a Man as this would ſooner die than owe his Life to an Enemy, and in regard to theſe Men this Rule muſt be underſtood thus.

1 Kin. 3. 26.

3. *Whatſoever ye would that any Man* (not this or that particular Perſon) *ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo unto them.* 4. If

4. If we would put the Caſe right, we muſt ſuppoſe the Circumſtances to be the ſame between our Neighbour and our ſelves. For one different Circumſtance will very much alter the Nature of an Action, thus upon Suppoſition, that I am ſtronger, and more healthy than my Neighbour, I may be willing that he may do ſome things to me, which if I ſhould do the ſame to him, would tend very much to his Prejudice and Diſadvantage. A rich and wealthy Man may be willing, that others ſhould with-hold their hands from doing him good, that he might have the ſame Excuſe, to deny his charitable Relief to the Poor. Nay, meer difference in Opinion may make it unreaſonable, that I ſhould deſire ſome things of ſuch a Man, which he might very reaſonably demand of me, and I ſhould readily comply with.

5. We muſt take Care in applying this Rule, that our Deſires be reſtrain'd to thoſe things, which we have juſt and reaſonable cauſe to expect from our Neighbour, and then this Rule will run thus: *Whatſoever ye have juſt and reaſonble cauſe to deſire that any Man in the ſame Circumſtances ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo unto them.* For every Malefactor, who is Sentenc'd to Puniſhment for his evil Deeds, would willingly have his Puniſhment remitted,

and the Judge himſelf would deſire it, if he was in the ſame Circumſtances and a Criminal at the Bar: But yet it is not juſt and reaſonable, that all Criminals ſhould be pardon'd, for this would make the Law it ſelf uſeleſs, by relaxing the co-ercive Power of it, and render Magiſtrates cheap and contemptible, when they are no longer
Rom. 13. 3. ble to be *a Terror to evil Doers*, but only Encouragers of thoſe who do well.

Theſe are the moſt conſiderable Limitations which Caſuiſts have affix'd to this Rule, to which all the reſt may eaſily be referr'd; which being duly underſtood, and conſider'd and will prepare my way,

III. To incite and encourage you, to the Practice of this Rule; by ſhewing the Excellency, and Uſefulneſs of it, in all the different Emergencies of Life. And,

1. 'Tis a Rule plain, and eaſie to be underſtood. A Rule which lies Level to every Capacity, the moſt plain and ignorant Perſon may comprehend it, and yet 'tis worthy the Study and Obſervance of the Wiſe and Learned, there is no need of turning over huge Volumes of Learning the Languages, Cuſtoms, and Manners of other Nations, every one that will but look into his own Conſcience, will find this Rule engraven there. Other Laws are

are perplex'd with innumerable Difficulties, ſpun out into nice and curious Queſtions, and depend much upon Cuſtoms, and Uſages in the Practice of them, ſo that it requires much Study and Pains to attain to any competent meaſure of Knowledge in them; but this is as ſoon learned as comprehended, and as ſoon comprehended as ſeriouſly conſider'd; it requires nothing, but an ordinary Application to underſtand it, and an honeſt heart to put it in Practice.

2. 'Tis a moſt juſt and reaſonable Rule. 'Twas eſteem'd ſo both by Jews and Heathens, before the coming of our Saviour; they collected this Rule from the Principles of Reaſon, and laid it down for an undoubted Axiom, and unqueſtionable Truth. 'Tis true, that 'tis not found in expreſs Words, in the Canonical Books of the Old Teſtament, but yet it was certainly known to the Jews, both becauſe we may find there many Precepts of the ſame Import, and in the Apocryphal Book of *Tobit*, an Expreſſion very near of kin to it, *Do that to no Man which thou hateſt.* The Emperour *Severus* (who had theſe words frequently in his Mouth, and was ſo taken with them, that he order'd them to be wrote in his Courts of Judicature) is ſaid to have had them from

Iſocrat. ad Nicoclem. Diogenes Laertius, l. 5. p. 313. Dion Caſſius, l. 51 492, 493.

Levit. 19. 18. Deut. 16, 11, 12. Pſal. 7. 4.

the Jews and Chriſtians, of whom he entertain'd a more favourable Opinion, meerly on this Account. But not to depend ſolely on Authority, it's plain, that this Rule is founded upon that firſt Principle of ſelf Preſervation: For ſince every Man deſires to preſerve himſelf in being, and to live as eaſie and comfortably as he can; we cannot reaſonably expect that other Men ſhould part with thoſe good things we ſtand in need of, unleſs we give our helping hand to ſupply their Wants. For though Men are plac'd in different Ranks and Stations in this World, yet do they naturally depend one upon another, and mutually contribute to the Weal of the Community, the one cannot ſay to the other, *I have no need of thee*; but the Poor is as uſeful to the Rich, as the Rich is beneficial to the Poor: And therefore, 'tis highly reaſonable, that every Man ſhould endeavour to be as uſeful, and aſſiſtant to others, as he expects they ſhould be to him. For what Reaſon have I to expect that another Man ſhould contribute to my Happineſs, but upon ſuch Grounds and Principles, as make it equally as reaſonable, and neceſſary for me to contribute to his? What Privilege, or Prerogative can any one Man imagine himſelf, to have above the reſt of the World,

World, that all Men ſhould agree together to make him Happy, without any reſpect to their own Intereſt and Welfare? Can we imagine any Man to be more concern'd for another Man's ſatisfaction than his own? Or to be better pleas'd in making another Man happy, than to be ſo himſelf? Since therefore every Man doth in the firſt place, deſire and ſeek after the Preſervation of his own Being, and then endeavour to keep himſelf in as eaſie and agreeable a Condition as poſſibly he can, and ſince this cannot be effected without a mutual Participation of thoſe good things which other Men are poſſeſs'd of; it evidently follows, that the way to induce them to part with thoſe good things which would be uſeful to us, is reciprocally to contribute to the ſupply of their Neceſſities; and the moſt juſt and equitable Rule of governing our Actions towards them, is placing our ſelves in their ſtead, and conſidering what we ſhould reaſonably expect from them, if we were in the ſame Wants, and under the ſame Circumſtances.

3. 'Tis a Rule of univerſal Influence. A Rule which will ſerve at all Times, and for all ſorts and degrees of Perſons, and may be apply'd to all Exigences, and will reach all ſorts of Caſes depending between us and our Neighbour. 'Tis a Rule which

Epiſcop. Inſtitut. Theol. p. 249.

will ſerve the Peaſant, as well as the Prince, and obliges the Prince, as well as the pooreſt Subject. It teaches Inferiours to pay Reſpect and Submiſſion to thoſe who are in a higher Station, becauſe they do expect it from thoſe who are below them; it teaches Superiours to be kind, and beneficent to their Inferiours, and to afford them ſeaſonable Help, Counſel, and Relief, becauſe they look for theſe good Turns, from thoſe who are above them; and it engages every one to be kind and faithful to his Equals, that hereby he may purchaſe their Love and Fidelity towards him; it engages Magiſtrates to diſtribute Juſtice impartially, becauſe they would think it their due, to be protected both in their Life and Eſtate, and would be deſirous, to be ſecured from all Wrong and Violence, if they were private Men. Nay, this Rule will not only teach us to give every one his due, becauſe we do expect to receive our due from others, which is ſtrict Juſtice: But hereby every Man may Erect a Court of Chancery in his own Breaſt, and conſider when, and how it comes to paſs, that ſtrict and rigid Juſtice becomes the higheſt Injuſtice; when we ought to proceed according to the Letter of the Law, and when, and in what Caſes it allows of ſome Mitigation and

and Relief: In ſhort, there is hardly any Caſe in which we are doubtful, how to behave our ſelf towards our Neighbour, in which we may not be directed by the Application of this excellent Rule.

4. This is a Rule by which we ſhall be Judg'd both here and hereafter. *For with what Judgment we judge, we ſhall be judg'd; and with what meaſure we mete, it ſhall be meaſur'd to us again.* That which induc'd the Heathens to obſerve this Rule, was an awe and dread, that the future Event of their Actions, ſhould be agreeable with their preſent Dealings with other Men. And in truth we have many remarkable Inſtances, both in Sacred and prophane Authors, of God's dealing with Men according to their Works, and inflicting ſuch Puniſhments on them in this World, as exactly ſquare with their Offences; and hereby as it were pointing out to others, that this was the very Cauſe why they were inflicted. When we read that *Haman* was hanged on the very ſame Gallows, that he cauſed to be Erected for poor *Mordecai*, that *Adonibezek* (*who cut off the Thumbs and Great Toes of Threeſcore and ten Kings, and forced them to gather up the Crumbs under his Table*) had the ſame Calamity inflicted on him, we have good Reaſon to believe,

Matt. 7. 2.

Judg. 1. 7.

believe, that the Reflection he made was true. *As I have done, ſo hath the Lord requited me*; we cannot but take notice that God's Juſtice bears pace with theſe Men's Sins, and that they receiv'd the juſt demerit of their Offences: But where Juſtice is ſlow-pac'd, and doth not ſeize the Sinner in this Life, it will certainly overtake him at the laſt, and at the great Day of Account, when we ſhall all ſtand before God's Tribunal, the chief Enquiry ſhall be made; how well we have obſerv'd this Rule, whether we have been Converſant in works of Juſtice and Mercy, *in feeding the hungry, cloathing the* Matt. 25. *naked, comforting the afflicted*, &c. and 36. ſuch as our Behaviour has been, ſuch will our Sentence be.

Thus I have endeavour'd to recommend this excellent Rule laid down in the Text to your Practice, becauſe it is the moſt plain and eaſie Rule, highly juſt and reaſonable, of univerſal Uſe, and ſuited to all Conditions and Circumſtances, of Humane Life, and the Rule we ſhall be judg'd by, both here and hereafter. I come,

IV. And Laſtly to conclude, with ſome few Reflections on the preceding Diſcourſe. And,

1.

1. I ſhall take notice, That the Way to do good to our ſelves, is to do good to others. For ſince we are all the Members of one Body, of which Chriſt is the Head, whatſoever one Member enjoys, the other Members partake of the Benefit. Every good Deed which we perform is an Addition to the common Treaſury, in which every one has a ſhare and intereſt: And the more Good any Man doth, the ſtronger Claim he has to the help and aſſiſtance, Love and Friendſhip, of other Men. A truly good and beneficent Man, is a Benefactor to all Mankind; becauſe his Love extends to all, though he has not always an Opportunity, or Ability of exerting it; and this Divine Quality has ſuch endearing Charms, that it muſt needs attract the Love and Friendſhip of others, the Benefits which he beſtows enrich him, and return into his own Boſom: So that the words of the Text will be found true even in this Senſe; that the way to make our ſelves Maſters of the Affections of other Men, and to ſecure to our ſelves their Help and Aſſiſtance in a time of need, or to obtain from them thoſe things we deſire, is to make our ſelves as uſeful and beneficial to them, as our Circumſtances will permit. *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye ſo unto them,*

them, &c. From whence we may inferr,

2. That no Pretence of any Injury receiv'd, can be a reaſonable Cauſe for our returning it; or for our doing Evil to other Men. Their unjuſt Dealings with us, ought to be no Standard, nor will they be any reaſonable Excuſe, for our Dealing with them after the ſame manner; for 'tis not whatſoever Men have done to you: But *whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you.* Now there is no Man would willingly receive any Injury either in his Body, Goods, or Reputation; and therefore he ought to be careful, that he doth none to other Men: And if he doth receive any Prejudice from them, to take Care that he is not provok'd to reſent it ſo far, as to be Guilty of a more heinous Crime, by returning of it. For to return an Injury, renders a Man more blameable, than at firſt to inflict one: For he that doth an Injury to another Man, doth not conſider of what pernicious Conſequence his injurious Action is, he doth it raſhly and unadviſedly, he is blinded with Paſſion, and though he Wills the Action, yet probably he may diſown the ill Effects which it produces: But he that returns an Injury, doth not only ſin knowingly, and deliberately, but wilfully and obſtinately, in oppoſition to his own Senſe and Feeling, he plainly perceives all the evil Conſequences

quences of the Action, he is ſenſible of them, and has ſmarted under them, and yet he goes on maliciouſly to execute his Revenge. 'Tis therefore our unqueſtionable Duty, either to paſs by Injuries, and take no Notice of them if ſmall and inconſiderable, or generouſly to forgive them, and by heaping Coals of kindneſs upon the Heads of our Enemies, endeavour to melt them down into Love and Friendſhip; unleſs in ſome particular Caſes, where ſome Circumſtances render it more adviſable, to remit them to the Umpiridge of the Law.

3. From hence we may inferr of what vaſt Importance it is, that this Rule ſhould be ſeriouſly conſider'd, and Conſcientiouſly practis'd. For as on the one hand 'tis plain, that the greateſt part of thoſe Miſchiefs which happen, either to Communities, or to private Perſons, do in a great meaſure proceed from our neglect of this Rule: So on the other 'tis as evident, that a careful Obſervation of it, would wonderfully conduce to their Weal, and flouriſhing Condition. With reſpect to Communities 'tis evident, That were Men once let looſe from the Obligation of this Rule, the World would be fill'd with Blood-ſhed, Rapine, and Oppreſſion; every one would ſeize on what beſt pleas'd him,

him, and the ſtrongeſt Arm would have the greateſt ſhare: But ſince every one is deſirous to retain, and enjoy thoſe good things which he doth poſſeſs, hence 'tis that he finds it neceſſary to joyn with others for their mutual defence. Not but that Man is naturally a Political Creature, and takes delight in the mutual Society, and converſe of reaſonable Beings like himſelf; and therefore Mankind would have form'd themſelves into Societies, tho' the World had continued in its Original Innocency, and Violence and Oppreſſion had never enter'd into it: But yet ſince the Fall, our Natures are ſo deprav'd, and we have degenerated ſo far from that noble Rank of Beings, in which we were plac'd, that had not Men ſome Awe of this Rule upon their Minds, there would be no poſſibility of living in the World: And if 'tis neceſſary to the Eſſence of Government, much more to its Well-being; for do not all our mutual Correſpondence, and friendly Converſe depend on the Practice of thoſe Vertues, which naturally reſult from the Obſervance of this Rule; ſuch as are Veracity in our Words, Faithfulneſs to our Truſt, Juſtice in our Dealings, and the like. And thus as to the Concerns of particular Perſons, is it not obvious that this Rule when duly obſerv'd, directly

directly tends to root out all Envy, Paſſion, and Malice from the Hearts of Men; to take away the Cauſes of Differences, and Animoſities, and to promote Peace and Quietneſs, and a good Underſtanding between Neighbours and Acquaintance? would it not be effectual to ſecure us againſt Fraud, Oppreſſion, and Injuſtice? Would it not beget Comfort and Satisfaction in our Minds, and prove of wonderful Force and Efficacy, to ſupport us under all the Troubles and Afflictions, which can poſſibly befall us in this *Vale of Tears*?

Many are the Benefits which would flow from a due and conſcientious Obſervance of this Rule, only to name them would take up more time than I have now left, and therefore I ſhall remit this Subject to your private Meditations, though the beſt way to Frame an adequate Notion of them, would be to put this Rule in Practice.

4. Let us admire the infinite Goodneſs of God, who is pleas'd to govern us by ſuch Laws, as are highly juſt and reaſonable, and tend to promote our Happineſs, both in this World, and the next. He doth not impoſe on us ſuch Arbitrary Commands, as carry with them no Reaſon why they ſhould be obey'd, but only the Will of the Impoſer; but the Eſſential

ſential Goodneſs of his Nature inclines him, to give us ſuch Laws, as ennoble our Natures, and make us more like himſelf, and more capable of that Happineſs, which he hath prepared for us, as the Reward of our Obedience. He firſt places in us a natural Inſtinct to Love and preſerve our ſelves, and then makes this both the Meaſure and Motive of loving others: So plain and evident is it, that God deſigns the Good and Welfare of his Creatures, becauſe he makes their Deſires, the Meaſures of their Duty; and his Commands are agreeable to their natural Inclinations.

5. And Laſtly, how unexcuſable ſhall we be left, if we do not live in the Obſervance of this excellent Rule. For had God laid a more weighty Burthen upon us, had he commanded us all thoſe numerous Obſervances, which the Jews under the Law were oblig'd to perform; *A yoak which they were not able to bear*: Or all thoſe Mortifications, and that Auſtere way of Living, which ſome poor Miſtaken Chriſtians impoſe upon themſelves; yet we ſhould have had Inducements ſufficient to perform all this: Heaven and eternal Happineſs would have made amends for the hardeſt uſage we could have undergone in this World: But when God has laid upon our Shoulders, ſo good and gra-

cious

cious a Yoak, such Just reasonable and equitable Commands, so agreeable to our Natures, and so much for our Interest; what can we say for our selves? What Excuse can we make, if we do not comply with them? Can any thing be more reasonable, than to do by others as we would have others do by us? And yet the Observance of this Rule, comprehends the chiefest part of our Duty. Even those who are most backward in the performance of it themselves, yet are generally very rigid in exacting it from others: There is no Man but would willingly be comforted in a time of Trouble, protected in a time of Danger and Calamity, reliev'd in a time of Want and Sickness, though he neglects the performance of these Duties towards his Neighbour. What Answer then shall we make at the great Day of Account, when an Inquiry shall be made, whether we have visited the Sick, fed the Hungry, or cloathed the Naked, and relieved the Prisoner, and in short, whether we have *done Justice and lov'd Mercy*? How dreadful will that Sentence be which shall pass upon those Men, who have neglected these Duties? And if those Persons shall be condemn'd, who have neglected them, who have barely omitted the performance of them, where shall

thoſe Men appear, who have practis'd the quite contrary? Who have oppreſs'd the Poor and Needy, circumvented and defrauded their Neighbour, and have went on during the whole Courſe of their Lives; in Acts of Injuſtice, Oppreſſion, Extortion; contrary to the Checks of their Conſciences, and the known Rules of their Duty? Certainly God will pour out the full Vials of his Wrath upon theſe Men, and *give them their Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers.*

God grant that we may not be Partakers in their Guilt, and then we ſhall not undergo the ſame Puniſhment: but that by a conſcientious Obſervance of this Rule, *of doing by others, as we our ſelves would deſire to be done unto*; we may obtain the end of our Hopes, and the Fruit of our Obedience; the Salvation of our Souls.

F I N I S.

THE Reader is deſired to Correct thiſe following Errata's with his Pen.

ERRATA.

PAge 6. *l.* 2. *r.* Man. p. 10. *l. ult. r.* Virtuous. p. 20. *l.* 22. *r.* which. p. 27. *l.* 21. *r.* it were. p. 60. *l.* 18. *r.* recount. p. 89. *l.* 21. *r.* grateful. p. 92. *l.* 18. *r.* let out. p. 104. *l.* 3. *r.* Chappel. p. 245. *l.* penult. *r.* writ.

Beſides ſome literal Faults which are eaſie to be mended by the Eye.